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Platonic sophrosyne

Many-headed beast or a simpler creature?

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Abstract

I will argue in this thesis for a prominent position of sophrosyne in the Platonic dialogues commonly considered early and middle, with the *Charmides* as a point of departure and as the spine in the main body of the study and with the *Republic* as the main contender. I maintain that the concept of sophrosyne intended at different points in the dialogues is more uniform than is often assumed. In particular, I focus on the relationship between love, which in its erotic form (ἔρως) is often portrayed by Plato, and in popular morality is often considered, as the *opposite* or at least as an *opponent* of sophrosyne, and self-knowledge, which is at different points in the Platonic corpus associated or identified with sophrosyne. I contend that each of the definitions in the *Charmides* can be argued to provide significant aspects of sophrosyne as portrayed in the *Republic*.

Preface

For all quotations from Greek literature I employ the most recent Oxford Classical Text, unless otherwise noted. For Plato I have decided to stick with the text of Burnet,¹ in spite of the arrival of a revised volume one. All translations are my own. Greek phrases in the main text are generally left untransliterated, but ‘sophrosyne’ is treated as if it were an English word throughout. Abbreviated references to ancient authors and works follow the abbreviations of LSJ.

I spend some time in my introduction on discussing methodological difficulties with the study of the Platonic dialogues. While I end up with a kind of methodological agnosticism, this will not always be reflected in my choice of description of the Platonic works, as repeated instances of ‘the character Socrates in the work commonly ascribed to the author Plato may be taken to argue that ...’ or ‘one of the so-called Socratic dialogues’ soon becomes tedious. I trust that the reader will overlook any lack of precision in such cases, unless of course it is deemed to conceal a hidden premise.

¹ John Burnet (ed.), *Platonis opera*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900–07).

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Introduction

Sophrosyne was a strange virtue in ancient times. It remains an elusive concept and is uncontroversially one of the most difficult Greek words to translate into a modern language. The semantic and conceptual history of sophrosyne from Homer to Aristotle is a particularly colourful journey, traversing the battlefields of the Persian war, the Peloponnesian war and eventually casting its shadow over Athenian class struggle as the empire enters its final phase, torn between poets and politicians, mind and body, soul and society. Even as Aristotle has just cut the excellence down to size, soberly reducing it to one item in a lengthy catalogue of moral virtues, it suddenly crops up in the acropolis of the *Nicomachean ethics*, conjuring the ghost of its former greatness, at one stroke saving φρόνησις from itself and revealing the vulnerability of this all too human virtue as compared with divine σοφία.¹

If φρόνησις retains its divinity with Plato, the cosmological status of sophrosyne is less than obvious. One is easily misled by the inferior humanity sometimes ascribed to sophrosyne throughout the dialogues: the ‘human’ and ‘mortal’ sophrosyne of the *Phaedrus*, the ‘naïve’, ‘popular’ and ‘mindless’ sophrosyne of the *Phaedo*.² And where the content of sophrosyne is to a large extent straight-forward and constant in Aristotle, Platonic sophrosyne is a complex and slippery creature, admittedly difficult to define – as we quickly gather from the *Charmides* – and once defined notoriously hard to grasp – as its controversial position vis-à-vis δικαιοσύνη serves to show in the *Republic*. In other dialogues the author plays upon the historically ambiguous word to trick one or more interlocutors into reluctant acceptance of a conclusion.³ One is left feeling uncertain whether advantage has been taken of a term with different and distinct

¹ *Eth. Nic.* 1140b7–20. This passage has recently provoked one scholar into claiming Aristotelian ἀκολασία, the vice corresponding to sophrosyne in Aristotle, as a ‘radical ethical vice’ (Kontos, ‘Ἀκολασία’). ² ἡ παρ’ ἀνθρώπων γιγνομένη σωφροσύνη (*Phdr.* 244d4–5), σωφροσύνη ἀνθρωπίνη (256b6), σωφροσύνη θνητή (256e5), ἡ εὐήθης σωφροσύνη (*Phd.* 68e5), ἡ δημοτικὴ καὶ πολιτικὴ ἀρετὴ ... ἣν δὴ καλοῦσι σωφροσύνην τε καὶ δικαιοσύνην, ἐξ ἑθους τε καὶ μελέτης γεγонуῖαν ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ (82a11–b3). Compare the ‘true’ sophrosyne appearing at *Phdr.* 247d6, 250b2 and *Phd.* 69b2, c1. ³ *Grg.* 507a1 ff., cf. Dodds, *Gorgias*, 336; *Prt.* 332a4 ff. A similar ambiguity, admittedly not in an ‘elenctic’ context, may be detected at *Smp.* 219d3–7.

senses,⁴ or if the concept in question is one and complex. Is there one virtue or several which go by the name of ‘sophrosyne’?⁵

This thesis will explore the concept of sophrosyne in the Platonic dialogues, with a particular emphasis upon the *Charmides* and the *Republic*, wherein our concept receives the most undivided attention. The ‘late works’ – *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Sophist*, *Politicus*, *Philebus*, *Laws* – will to a large extent be excluded from the investigation, due to a demand for limitation. (It would be a shame to overreach oneself in a study of sophrosyne ...) In particular, I will attempt to bring together the discourse on sophrosyne in the *Charmides* and the attention it receives in the *Republic*.

There are several approaches available for such an investigation, and the last fifty years have seen the launch of two major studies of sophrosyne, Helen North’s *Sophrosyne: self-knowledge and self-restraint in Greek literature* and Adriaan Rademaker’s ‘Sôphrosynê: polysemy, prototypicality & persuasive use of an ancient Greek value term’, the former tracing the concept from Homer up until the church Fathers, the latter concentrating on the literature from Homer to Plato. It would not be terribly off the mark to claim that North’s book belongs to the history of ideas,⁶ while Rademaker employs a linguistic approach in his dissertation, although his aim is to establish a ‘synchronic semantic description of the uses’ of the word and its cognates before going on to locate the different uses in the *Corpus Platonicum*.⁷ While I naturally will rely heavily on the results of both North and Rademaker, especially for information about the concept in writers other than Plato, my own approach will be more philosophically oriented. By this I mean that my interest in ‘ordinary language’ will be secondary; my aim is to investigate the philosophical concept or concepts of sophrosyne *qua* philosophical, i.e. as borne out by the philosophical thought which surrounds it and which resides in the text, and with a view to the

⁴ Cf. Rademaker, ‘Sôphrosynê’, 1: ‘In *Gorgias*, it would seem that Plato *exploits* the polysemy of the term for persuasive effect. Callicles unsurprisingly rejects σωφροσύνη in one of its typical uses, but Socrates forces him to accept it in another. Because the dialogue invokes these different uses of the term without in any way calling attention to the fact that they are indeed different uses, it then seems that Callicles is caught in contradiction.’ It is not obvious that ‘different uses of the term’ is the appropriate way to describe the procedure of the *Gorgias*. The whole point of Socrates’ argument is that sophrosyne is *necessarily* the virtue corresponding to both of the vices ἀφροσύνη and ἀκολασία. For a discussion of Rademaker’s approach, see Methodological reflections below.

⁵ Or, if one wishes to pursue the matter philosophically: What is Plato’s position on this question, and is his position true? Perhaps even: What account of sophrosyne is discernable in the works commonly ascribed to Plato, if there is such an account? And even more fundamentally: What would it mean for such an account to be ‘true’? See below for methodological discussions. ⁶ ‘My aim throughout has been to identify all the nuances of sophrosyne as they occur, to trace their development, and to suggest, where evidence is available, the reasons for such changes as seem explicable in the light of altered political, social, religious, or economic conditions, or the special interests of a given author.’ (North, *Sophrosyne*, p. viii) ⁷ ‘This study aims to address two related topics. First, it aims to give a synchronic semantic description of the uses of σώφρων, σωφροσύνη, σωφρονεῖν and cognates in non-philosophical classical Greek up to the time of Plato, that is to say in the first half of the fourth century BC. Second, it investigates Plato’s use of these terms from the viewpoint of ordinary, non-philosophical language usage.’ (Rademaker, ‘Sôphrosynê’, 1)

truth of this concept and its philosophical import.⁸ I will also contend that this approach is presupposed by North and Rademaker when they study *sophrosyne* in Plato.⁹ Plato's 'different uses' of word and concept entail an understanding of the thought and philosophical context within which they come to be used, and unless one considers Platonic thought as obvious to all and not in need of interpretation, one's interpretative understanding of the philosophical context within which *sophrosyne* shows up needs to be foregrounded in an investigation of usage.¹⁰ This is not of course to deny that (that evasive concept) 'ordinary language' is of fundamental significance, insofar as as philosophical writing at the very least *springs out of* ordinary language.¹¹

Sophrosyne and related concepts

North notes that with regard to Plato 'it is difficult to separate the theme of *sophrosyne* from the multitude of other subjects with which it is intervoven'.¹² All these subjects are relevant to a complete philosophical assessment of Platonic *sophrosyne*. In this study I will concentrate upon three notions which I consider to be of particular relevance, and which will serve to focus the investigation; they are *love*, *self* and *knowledge*.

The choice of these three ideas is not arbitrary. Firstly, 'control of one's desires' was the central connotation of '*sophrosyne*' in ordinary Athenian language use by the time of Plato,¹³

⁸ By 'truth' I do not assume that *sophrosyne* can be assessed 'ahistorically', there may be such a thing as historical truth. As always when one ventures to engage in a philosophical investigation, the concept of truth becomes vulnerable. ⁹ North acknowledges that 'the dramatic structure of each dialogue and the character of the interlocutors who are to be refuted or convinced always determine how *sophrosyne* is to be regarded' (*Sophrosyne*, 152). ¹⁰ Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer's comment on the interpretation of Aristotle: 'Daß der historisch gesinnte Philologe mit Notwendigkeit von der philosophischen "Sache", um die es bei Aristoteles geht, nicht unberührt blieb, auch wenn er Aristoteles' Philosophie für genügend tot hielt, um ihn "historisch" zu sehen, wundert uns heute nicht. Die "Entwicklung" der aristotelischen Philosophie läßt sich nicht ermitteln ohne eine Vorstellung dessen, was sich da entwickelt. Auch "rein philologisch" gemeinte Kommentare ... bezeugen das gleiche.' ('Zur aristotelischen Ethik', 302) The necessity for such an approach to a similar subject is acknowledged by Gill: 'We must read philosophy *as philosophy* before using it as material for some other kind of enquiry.' (*Personality*, 17)

¹¹ Nicholas White writes: 'The elucidation of a concept isn't, to Plato's way of thinking, simply a way of explaining or rationalizing ordinary usage. Therefore he doesn't believe that he's obliged to adhere to ordinary or pre-reflective judgments that that or any other standing usage enshrines.' (White, 'Goodness', 357) This is probably true to the extent that ordinary usage and ordinary judgment is not allowed the final word, but however strange for instance the definition of *δικαιοσύνη* in book IV of the *Republic* would seem to the non-academic Athenian of the day, it purports to be a truer definition of the same concept, which could not be regarded as a 'concept' at all were it not for a relation to the idea, however corrupt this relation has become in everyday *λόγος*. In the end, Plato usually retains the words of ordinary Greek, the 'meaning' of which when in use maintains a necessary connection to at least those aspects of the background or horizon of that meaning which is not explicitly or implicitly excluded by the particular philosophical context in which they make their appearance. ¹² North, *Sophrosyne*, 151. ¹³ Rademaker, 'Sôphrosynê', 2: '... the most central ("prototypical") interpretation of *σωφροσύνη* for the most "central" members of ancient Greek society, adult male citizens.' Cf. his graphical 'conspectus' (195).

and however the interlocutors in the Platonic dialogues handle the concept, this sense looms large in the background and must be allowed to inform the reader, if only negatively. ἔρως is also observed flirting with sophrosyne at several important points in the dialogues, most conspicuously in the two speeches of Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, where both the content of and the relationship between ἔρως and sophrosyne are ambiguous; also in the speech of Alcibiades in the *Symposium*,¹⁴ not to speak of the notorious passage in the *Charmides* where Socrates is on the brink of losing himself at the sight of the hidden treasures underneath Charmides' cloak.¹⁵ While 'ἔρως' in ordinary language has strong sexual connotations, one finds that Plato at times appears to use it as an alternative term for desire in general – a usage which hearkens back to Homer¹⁶ – or at least desire for τὰ καλά or τὸ καλόν as such (not merely οἱ καλοί). K. J. Dover remarks that 'since Plato's concept of eros differed from everyone else's, no evidence relating to his use of *erān* and *epithūmein* tells us anything about Greek usage in general',¹⁷ and thereby draws our attention to the fact that Plato does not only widen the usage of 'ἔρως' and its cognates – which perhaps could be explained by reference to stylistic reasons –, he develops his own peculiar *concept* of ἔρως, and it plays an important part in his philosophical thought. I will quote in full the interpretation of E. R. Dodds, which we shall not assume as correct, but which will sharpen the direction of our thought:

Eros has a special importance in Plato's thought as being the one mode of experience which brings together the two natures of man, the divine self and the tethered beast. For Eros is frankly rooted in what man shares with the animals, the physiological impulse of sex (a fact which is unfortunately obscured by the persistent modern misuse of the term 'Platonic love'); yet Eros also supplies the dynamic impulse which drives the soul forward in its quest of a satisfaction transcending earthly experience. It thus spans the whole compass of human personality, and makes the one empirical bridge between man as he is and man as he might be. Plato in fact comes very close here to the Freudian concept of *libido* and sublimation. But he never, as it seems to me, fully integrated this line of thought with the rest of his philosophy; had he done so, the notion of the intellect as a self-sufficient entity independent of the body might have been imperilled, and Plato was not going to risk that.¹⁸

If sophrosyne bears an intrinsic relation to ἔρως (and we are in no position to take this for granted just yet), one will expect that the notion of sophrosyne will be affected by developments in the notion of ἔρως, and depending on the nature of this supposed relationship, the influence might flow both ways.

¹⁴ E.g. *Smp.* 216d2–7: ὁρᾶτε γὰρ ὅτι Σωκράτης ἐρωτικῶς διάκειται τῶν καλῶν ... ἐνδοθεν δὲ ἀνοιχθεὶς πόσης οἶεσθε γέμει, ὧ ἄνδρες συμπόται, σωφροσύνης; ¹⁵ *Chrm.* 155c4ff. The similarity between the 'inside glimpses' in the *Charmides* and the *Symposium* may be significant. ¹⁶ Cf. Dover, *Greek homosexuality*, 43. ¹⁷ Dover, *Greek homosexuality*, 43 n. 11. ¹⁸ Dodds, *Greeks and the irrational*, 218–19. As for the last assertion, to the extent that Plato locates all desire, rational and irrational, within the soul in such works as the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*, psychic independence would not seem to be imperilled at all. If anything, 'physiological impulse' would be a bit off the mark as far as Plato is concerned.

There is another significant point related to this aspect of ἔρως, which brings us to the subject of knowledge. A wide-spread contention has it that in the ‘Socratic version’ all human desire is desire for the truly good, and that the decisive ethical factor is the state of *knowledge* of this good in each individual. Conversely, the ‘Platonic version’ opens the gates to ‘irrational desires’, the objects of which are rivals of the good. Christopher Rowe has even made a case for making this the basis of a developmentalist interpretation of the Platonic dialogues.¹⁹ In the ‘middle dialogues’, there is a tendency for the erotic object of the philosophical soul, or the philosophical part of the soul, itself to be identified as learning, knowledge or wisdom.²⁰ At any rate the relationship of motivation and rationality to desire and knowledge is not transparent to the naked eye.²¹ These circumstances impinge on the investigation of sophrosyne in several ways.

First, there is an ‘intellectual’ aspect to sophrosyne as handed down in the literature, where the ‘etymological’ connotation ‘soundness of mind’ figures alongside a notion of ‘prudence’ in particular,²² and which has been connected also with the Delphic γνῶθι σαυτόν (know thyself). This is the aspect awakened in the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias* where ἀφροσύνη is thrown up as the natural antithesis to sophrosyne,²³ and it reaches a climax with the knowledge-of-knowledge discussion in the *Charmides*. The latter is often interpreted as part of the ‘Socratic’ endeavour to show that all virtue is or involves knowledge. But one may wonder whether not sophrosyne carries a greater claim to association with knowledge than does virtues such as δικαιοσύνη, ὁσιότης and ἀνδρεία. This leads to the question of the connection between sophrosyne and φρόνησις/σοφία.²⁴ One should not so easily, I think, dismiss the proposals of the *Charmides* as simply rejected once and for all ‘because σωφροσύνη cannot then be meaningfully distinguished from other types of virtue,’²⁵ however aporetic the end of the discussion.

Second, this intellectual *aspect* of sophrosyne, as I so boldly termed it, is as we have seen but *one* aspect (or separate connotation, as it may be). It is the *complex* nature of sophrosyne, its vacillation at the interface between character and intellect, which renders it the perfect occasion for exploring the nature of and relation between knowledge and desire, rational and irrational, and those elusive concepts: character and intellect. In harmony with this observation is the fact that the knowledge associated with sophrosyne is seldom encountered in contemplation of the world outside or the great beyond, its domain is rather the knower himself. What is the nature of this *self-knowledge*, how are we to conceive of the ‘self’ which is both knower and known, and how does this knowledge relate to other kinds of knowledge, in particular knowledge of

¹⁹ Rowe, ‘Plato, Socrates and developmentalism’ ...; ‘Interpreting Plato’, 18 ff. See below for critical assessment of his approach. ²⁰ e.g. *Phd.* 68a7, *R.* 571b ... ²¹ Some of the issues are discussed by Rowe in ‘Plato’s “Socratic” dialogues’, which is a response to Charles Kahn’s *Plato and the Socratic dialogue*. ²² For an overview, see Rademaker, ‘Sôphrosynê’, 178–81. ²³ See n. 3 ²⁴ φρόνησις and σοφία are not strictly separated in Plato, as they come to be in Aristotle. ²⁵ Rademaker, ‘Sôphrosynê’, 242.

the good?

The question of the self reappears in a different context when Socrates is persuaded to define sophrosyne in the *Republic*. Our virtue first incites the very partition of the infamous tripartite soul, before it ends up as the glue which prevents the brittle structure from breaking apart. It is defined as συμφωνία (harmony), φιλία (friendship) and ὁμόνοια (unity of mind) between the different elements, and ὁμοδοξία (unity of opinion) as to which is to rule and which to be ruled. Are these merely euphemisms for subjugation, or are the ‘irrational’ parts truly capable of the kind of agreement implied by terms such as ὁμόνοια and ὁμοδοξία?

Again, if ‘φιλία’ is not simply a poetic metaphor, one would be entitled to wonder about the fact that while the definition of sophrosyne is supposed to be an interpretation of τὸ κρείττους εἶναι τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν τῶν ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς τε καὶ φαύλοις τὰς ἐπιθυμίας καὶ τὴν φρόνησιν τὴν ἐν τοῖς ἐλάττωσιν τε καὶ ἐπιεικεστέροις,²⁶ the definition itself is wrought in terms closely associated with ἐπιθυμία.²⁷ Hence, when I mentioned ‘love’ as one of three subjects I will bring to bear upon the present investigation, this includes both ἔρως and φιλία, their differences and their points of connection.

Reflections on method

The study of Plato’s philosophy encounters all the methodological difficulties attaching to every study of any ancient Greek author, and it is not exempt from the particular considerations due to all engagement with philosophical texts, but it harbours in addition several obstacles of its own. The three most important are closely related and may be described as the Socratic problem, the Platonic question and the problem of the dialogue form.

The first concerns our knowledge of the historical Socrates and his relation to the character Socrates in the dialogues of Plato and the thought displayed in these works. To what extent is the interlocutor of the dialogues true to the historical person? In particular, how much, if anything, of the ideas, if any, maintained by the dialogue figure can be ascribed to the real Socrates as contrasted with a distinctive Platonic mode of thought? Is it on the whole possible to make such a distinction and to trace a shift across the dialogues from ‘Socratic’ to ‘Platonic’?

We enter now what I referred to as the Platonic question, the question of how to approach, grasp and enjoy the *thought of Plato*. The most striking challenge at first glance is of course the presentation of this thought in the form of dialogues, to which I shall shortly return. An even more fundamental problem in the eyes of many is the obscurity of the internal relationship of

²⁶ See *R.* 431c20–d27, relating to sophrosyne of the *polis*. ²⁷ See *R.* 581a3, where φιλία appears to be used interchangeably with ἐπιθυμία, albeit arguably only to smooth over the use of φιλοχρήματος, φιλοκερδής, φιλότιμος etc.

the corpus: Is it at all permissible to draw upon one dialogue while interpreting another? If so, are they all consistent? If not – and this is the impression of most – how are we to account for the inconsistencies? Are they deliberate or not? If yes, what are the reasons? If no, what is their explanation? Are they the result of some intellectual or otherwise psychological deficit? Can they perhaps be traced to the natural development of an author's mind throughout a long life of thought and writing?

At this point we stumble upon the important developmentalist (hypo)thesis, which has enjoyed widespread influence in the Platonic scholarship of modern 'analytic' or 'Anglo-American' philosophy. The standard view revolves around the assumption that Plato's philosophical doctrines developed, that the chronology of composition is possible to establish at least in broad strokes, and that the portrait of Socrates in the presumed early group of dialogues is to a large extent faithful to the historical Socrates. In her book *Agora, Academy and the conduct of philosophy* Debra Nails collects and arranges the different kinds of evidence for establishing a compositional chronology, criticising every attempt as she goes along.²⁸ I find her criticisms and her resulting agnosticism convincing.

Perhaps the most impressive singular moment of her survey is the conspectus of a representative selection of proposed chronologies, arranged according to the criteria of stylometry, philology and philosophical content.²⁹ Apart from a comparatively uncontroversial 'late group', consisting of *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Sophist*, *Politicus*, *Philebus* and *Laws* – 'comparatively' because Holger Thesleff considers them to be written and edited by a secretary³⁰ – Nails concludes that 'the "fact" that the *Apology* is pre-middle [i.e. either 'early' or 'transitional'] is the one uncontroversial statement that can be made about the chronological order of the dialogues.'³¹

She moves on to a detailed critique, which I will not recount, of the attempt by Gregory Vlastos to establish criteria for distinguishing the truly Socratic Socrates from the Platonic one, before assessing the work of stylometricians, in particular the work of Gerard Ledger. Ledger provides the first (and at the time the only) stylometric study of the dialogues based on aspects of style which are guaranteed to be unconscious, and therefore one of exceedingly few to bypass what Nails terms the 'invidious circularity that so often occurs in Platonic stylometric studies',³² i.e. the assumption that certain stylistic changes are associated with developing age. Nails also notes two crucial caveats to reliance on stylometry: (1) If Plato consciously changed his style

²⁸ Nails, *Agora*, ch. 4–7. ²⁹ Nails, *Agora*, 62–8. Stylometricians: Campbell, Brandwood and Ledger; philologists: Lesky and Thesleff; philosophers: Guthrie, Irwin, Vlastos, Kahn, Kraut and Fine. ³⁰ I note that Nails appears to assent to Thesleff's picture of the development of the *Republic* and the 'late works' in Nails, 'Life of Plato', 6, 11.

³¹ Nails, *Agora*, 68. ³² Nails, *Agora*, 99.

back and forth instead of displaying linear development, stylometry is useless.³³ (2) If his style changed ‘subtly but not linearly’, stylometry could identify groups of dialogues written at about the same time, but their chronological relation to other groups would remain obscure.³⁴

Finally, she considers Thesleff’s idiosyncratic attack on developmentalism, and one element of his critical thrust is of particular importance to our study: Comparing a multitude of studies which on the basis of a single subject have proposed chronological arrangements of a group of dialogues, it is found that ‘when the *same dialogues* are examined for the evolution of Plato’s thought on *different topics*, different sequences are derived.’³⁵ Some of these studies could of course very well hit the mark, but needless to say, one should handle a developmentalist thesis such as that of Rowe, mentioned above,³⁶ with caution.³⁷

On account of this evidence there seems to be no short-cut to chronological certainty, and the developmentalist hypothesis may in any case be of little value.³⁸ As for the opposite viewpoint, that Plato’s thought did *not* develop, but remained the same, it is (likewise, it would seem) neither verifiable nor falsifiable without detailed interpretation of the corpus, and even then will have to rest its case on informed conviction.³⁹ However, this viewpoint is closely associated with the alternative explanation of inconsistencies and the like mentioned above: They are intentional. Charles Griswold articulates this belief as a hermeneutical principle, the hypothesis ‘that a text is coherent and possesses a unified meaning’, where ‘the main assumption supporting the hypothesis ... is that the author knows precisely what he is doing and so that he means to write both what and how he does write.’⁴⁰

The companion piece to this approach to the Platonic dialogues is the assumption that *what* is said depends on *how* it is said, that the dialogues should precisely *not* be read as philosophical treatises fettered by irrelevant drama, but that the dramatic context needs to be appreciated as integral to whatever arguments emerge on the journey from prologue to epilogue. Accordingly, ‘Socrates’ is the mouthpiece of neither the historical Socrates nor the historical Plato, he is a character in a story and must be treated as such; any ‘doctrine’ or ‘meaning’ leans on each dialogue as a whole, not on isolated propositions at the lips of Socrates or some *xenos*, as the

³³ The ‘consciously’ is of course not really relevant. As long as there is the possibility that he changed his style along different parameters than age, stylometry remains problematic. Michael Bordt mentions the possibility that the subject of a dialogue, or the choice of interlocutors, may have affected the style of writing (Bordt, *Platon: Lysis*, 97). ³⁴ Nails, *Agora*, 100. ³⁵ Nails, *Agora*, 129. ³⁶ See p. 5. ³⁷ See also the convincing criticism of the ‘standard chronology’ by Nicholas Denyer the introduction to his commentary on the *Alcibiades* (Denyer, *Plato: Alcibiades*, 20–26). ³⁸ As to its status quo, it is symptomatic that in the introduction to the collection of papers from a conference of 1999, Julia Annas refers to the ‘rapidly increasing breakdown of the long-accepted paradigm for interpreting Plato which rests on a broad division of the dialogues into “early” (and “Socratic”), “middle”, and “late”’ (‘Introduction’, p. ix.). ³⁹ Which perhaps should not really be considered a limitation; Gadamer criticises ‘the requirement of certainty that statements or judgments must meet if they are to satisfy the scientific consciousness of the modern world’, and argues for an older concept of certainty as the only viable approach to Plato (‘Reply to Nicholas P. White’, 258ff.). ⁴⁰ Griswold, *Self-knowledge*, 11.

case may be. I heartily embrace this principle of interpretation, while recognising that the phrase ‘the whole dialogue speaks’ has become something of a cliché.⁴¹ Griswold, however, adds two more guns to his interpretative arsenal, (1) that the *single* dialogue is the primary whole, while the Platonic corpus is lacking in sufficient organic unity,⁴² and (2) that the *dramatic* dates and the *fictional* chronology both makes possible and places limits on justifiable use of interdialogical reference. I subscribe to the former, but the latter, while interesting, should in my opinion be treated as less of a guiding principle of interpretation than as a possible result. While the dramatic date of some dialogues may be important to the interpretation of *these* dialogues considered as singular wholes, there are few indications to the effect that the ‘fictive chronology’ provides any systematic hermeneutical unity to the *corpus*.⁴³

But alas our subscription to the view that dramatic context is an integral part of the philosophical statement contained in a dialogue does not resolve the question of authorial intention. Griswold does not really define his concept of intention, but he excludes ‘causal factors (if any) that may surround the author’s psyche, the author’s motives, or what was going through his mind as he wrote’. The text is to be conceived as a coherent articulation of the truth aimed at its intended readers, and any aporia confronting the interpreter is to be assumed as part of the author’s design; it is not to be assumed as a *mistake*. He further lists two studies of the art of interpretation, the books of Juhl and Hirsch, and refers to the former for a clarification of the concept of authorial intention, but claims a closer bond to the overall theory of the latter; finally he praises the criticisms by Juhl and Hirsch of the hermeneutical writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Juhl’s concept of authorial intention may be explained as what the author ‘utters’ when he writes each particular sentence. Hirsch maintains that the only normative measure

⁴¹ Cf. Ferrari, review of Press. While I share Ferrari’s views on the kind of non-dogmatist New Platonism which he criticises – amounting to the claim that the dialogues so to speak lack a philosophical *object*, I believe that the Gadamerian approach I set out below avoids this attack. ⁴² Griswold, *Self-knowledge*, 15. ⁴³ In any case, Griswold’s claim that ‘Plato has ordered most of the dialogues in terms of a fictive chronology’ (Griswold, *Self-knowledge*, 15) is too strong, considering the lack of consensus concerning this order. A telling example is Griswold’s casual remark that ‘a brief examination of the *Symposium* will help us establish the significance of Phaedrus’ reappearance in the “later” *Phaedrus*’ (Griswold, *Self-knowledge*, 16), compared to the tentative order suggested by Nails (following Dover in dating the *Phaedrus*): *Phaedrus*, 416–18 BC; *Symposium*, 416 BC (Nails, *People*, 314). Griswold may have good arguments for his particular order, but it would seem that the hermeneutical relevance of this chronology begs the question; it must be established by, not guide, interdialogical reference. Wieland (Wieland, *Platon*, 89–93), to which Griswold refers for further discussion (Griswold, *Self-knowledge*, 249 n. 28), achieves a very interesting interpretation of the import of the *Parmenides* with the use of fictional chronology, but his point of departure is the unique position of this dialogue when the extra-ordinary content (criticism of the Ideas) combines with the exceptional dramatic date (450 BC, Socrates for once portrayed as a young man). He does not appear to encourage the kind of general principle of interpretation apparently endorsed by Griswold when he writes that ‘the fictive chronology prevents us from using a (fictively) later dialogue in order to interpret an earlier one’ (Griswold, *Self-knowledge*, 16).

for the meaning of a text is the meaning of the author, including his 'unconscious' meaning.⁴⁴ As for their criticism of Gadamer, I disagree with both Hirsch and Juhl, and by implication also the foregrounding of authorial intention conducted by Griswold.⁴⁵ I will defend Gadamer's general theory of interpretation in the following paragraphs.⁴⁶

The main point about Gadamer's aversion to the doctrine of authorial intention is precisely that one should read the text as primarily a claim to truth, not as an exposition of the author's idiosyncratic state of mind. If it is a claim to truth, it cannot be understood as such unless the subject matter (*die Sache*) itself is brought to question by the interpreter. Now, Gadamer does not believe in the 'perennial problem', there is no such thing as a timeless subject matter, which is not to say that it is up for grabs and a figment of the imagination, nor that it lacks any form of *identity*; rather this identity is *preserved* by the tradition of questioning, the repeated προβολή of the πρόβλημα, and by the preservation inherent in language. The subject matter does not remain wedded to the subjectivity of the individual because the individual is not a self-

⁴⁴ I admit that this exposition of their respective positions is scant to say the least, and necessarily an oversimplification which does not do justice to their comprehensive studies. I refer to their books for detailed accounts. My own defence of the basic tenets of Gadamer's theory excludes the position of Juhl and Hirsch. ⁴⁵ Juhl's short and superficial criticism is misguided because it is directed solely upon Gadamer's description of the overcoming of misunderstandings, which he misconstrues. While Gadamer's description presupposes that the enlightened interpreter is in fact open to the claim of the other / the text, in the way he describes the 'experienced' interpreter, Juhl's construction of it does not. Hirsch in his thorough critique clearly misconstrues Gadamer's notion of 'possibility' and 'concretisation', thus mistaking the 'meaning of the text' as 'a never-exhausted array of possible meanings' (p. 249) – Gadamer clearly states that the interpretation when successful is not an *other* meaning, but the concretisation of the original meaning, the interpretation is more of a *relation* to the text than a second product, if the text is an ἔργον, the interpretation is an ἐνέργεια; his criticism of the lack of objective ways of resolving disagreements of interpretation at any one time (ibid.) is a product of the same misunderstanding, there is an objective standard, the text itself, as a more pregnant possibility than that which is assumed by Hirsch; he misconstrues the concept of tradition as a supposedly 'stable norm', 'a principle for resolving disagreements between contemporary readers', while maintaining that it is 'no more or less than the history of how a text has been interpreted ... a changing, descriptive concept' (p. 250). But the tradition of a text does not exist without the normativity of the text itself, and the Gadamerian concept of tradition is not the history of a text's interpretation, but the whole of history within which the text was conceived and transmitted, again tradition is a *relation* to the text; he misconstrues the concept of 'perspective' as something closed up from the start (p. 254), while the Gadamerian concept of perspective cannot be disconnected from his concept of prejudice, which, if unbreakable, retains the character of pre-, i.e. it is a concept of potential *openness*; he effects a complete misconstrual Heidegger's concept of temporality – which he by the way has correctly understood as a major source for understanding Gadamer's thinking – and surely misrepresents as well Gadamer's presentation of this concept when he claims that 'Heidegger, on Gadamer's interpretation, denies that past meanings can be reproduced in the present because the past is ontologically alien to the present' (p. 256), and what he calls the 'radical historicity' of both; finally, he advances his own concept of pre-apprehension as a competitor to the misconstrued concept of Gadamerian prejudice, which fails utterly to attain the potency of the concept of *question*, which is essential to the theory of prejudice maintained by Gadamer, and which is not mentioned with one word by Hirsch; on the whole he construes Gadamer's dictum 'understanding → interpretation' as if understanding simply *is* interpretation while interpretation is merely the translation into the idiom of the day or of the individual. While for Gadamer to say that understanding → interpretation → application is to say that the individual interpreter establishes and remains in an understanding, interpreting and applying relation to the text, i.e. partakes in its meaning. ⁴⁶ My account is based on Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode, passim*, as well as 'Zwischen Phänomenologie und Dialektik' and 'Text und interpretation'.

contained subject cut off from the world of objects to which it must gain access; the individual is essentially worldly and understands itself *immer schon* in terms of this world of objects on account of being part of a tradition into which it is thrown. Neither is the tradition something apart from either the 'subject' or the 'objects', but the historical world within which both subject and object first appear.

In practical terms, it is reasonable to begin to read a singular Platonic dialogue, and understand each singular 'statement' within the whole represented by that dialogue. But the singular dialogue is no completely self-contained whole as is the impression one may gather from the Griswoldean approach; rather, it is caught up in its subject matter, and this subject matter shows itself (φαίνεται) within a historical horizon – the horizon of the text – as a φαινόμενον, to which are related not least the other works of the author. While the concept of psychological development on this account is a misguided approach founded on a misunderstanding of the nature of the ψυχή, this does not exclude the possibility that the 'letting-be-uncovered' of the phenomenon 'develops' and that there are both differences in the relation to the subject matter to be discerned across the dialogues and that these differences may throw light upon both of the dialogues and their phenomenon.⁴⁷ What is to be avoided is the comparison of singular statements across dialogues as if they existed in a vacuum; the horizons of the phenomenon must be established (logically) prior to the search for interrelations; it is not the *wording* which produces the meaning, but the meaning which recommends the wording. The necessity of 'external' evidence is entailed by the concept of language and meaning endorsed by Gadamer, insofar as one understands the externality as purely formal – embracing what is not explicitly written in the dialogues; however, this evidence is still *part* of the text as its essential horizon.

Remarks on structure

We have now determined the object, the sources and the approach of the study. The path which our investigation must take should follow from these considerations. The concepts of love, self and knowledge are all connected to sophrosyne, while the latter remains our primary object of investigation. Hence it makes sense to let sophrosyne determine our path, and to make room

⁴⁷ Interestingly, Gadamer himself appears to recognise a 'standard chronology' of the dialogues as a more or less established fact (*The idea of the good*, 21, 24), but criticises the 'naive chronological ordering' implied in the claim that 'Plato came to this theory [the doctrine of the ideas] only later on'; instead he seeks to establish a 'structural chronology' founded on 'structural similarities among groups of dialogues' (ibid. 21–2). Starting from certain knowledge – if it was available – about the actual chronology of composition would in any case appear to contradict Gadamer's approach to what he calls 'Plato's intentions as an author as well as the implicit content of the dialogues' (ibid.), where 'intention' should be understood as the relation to the subject matter, not as the kind of mental state devalued in *Wahrheit und Methode*.

for digressions on the subordinate concepts where they crop up. The concept of sophrosyne receives an exceptional treatment in the *Charmides* and the *Republic*. It is exceptional in that they contain explicit attempts at a complete definition; the discussions of the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias* are not thematic to the same extent. Furthermore, the outcome of the attempt in each of the two dialogues is very different. They will accordingly be the main focus of our study.

The ‘Socratic’ character of the *Charmides* renders it a proper place to formulate some questions about the nature of sophrosyne as such, questions which demand to be put from the very start, but which would lack the proper *ground* if we were to ask them ourselves before we have *any* material on which to apply them. A preliminary survey of the *use* of ‘sophrosyne’ in the older literature would supply some material, but this literature as we have it does not itself systematically ask the question of what *kind* of thing sophrosyne is. This is precisely the question introduced by Plato’s Socrates in the *Charmides*. Since I try to compare and bring together the accounts of sophrosyne in the *Charmides* and the *Republic*, the *Charmides* will remain the element which carries the structure of the investigation. We will proceed systematically through the *Charmides*, pausing at each junction to look for similarities and discrepancies in the *Republic*.

The *Charmides* may be divided into five main parts: The prologue and the four main definitions. Our study will adhere to this division. While interpreting the prologue, I found it prudent to stop and try to establish a preliminary interpretation of the Platonic concept of ἔργος, which plays a significant role in the prologue, and which remains important throughout. After this I stick more closely with the *Charmides*, the different sections representing the divisions of this dialogue.

Charmides: the question of sophrosyne

We are used in a philosophical context to think of sophrosyne as a virtue, an ἀρετή. In the earlier literature, the word ἀρετή was primarily connected with a different and in many respects opposite quality of that with which sophrosyne was to become associated. ἀρετή was the excellence of the noble-man warrior, a combination of the Aristotelian ἀνδρεία and μεγαλοψυχία upon the foundation of εὐγένεια, a ἔρμαιον on the battlefield, a close associate of ὕβρις in the political life of the later Greek city-state. While at times retaining its ancestral connotations in less rigid parts of the Platonic dialogues, ἀρετή is mostly treated as the quality corresponding to being ἀγαθόν – another word with a somewhat transformed horizon – as the opposite of κακία. The only explicit mention of ἀρετή in the *Charmides* is arguably of this kind, when Socrates extols the paternal lineage of Charmides by describing it as διαφέρουσα κάλλει τε καὶ ἀρετῇ καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ λεγομένη εὐδαιμονία ‘standing out in beauty and virtue and every other aspect of that which is called happiness’.⁴⁸

κάλλος τε καὶ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἡ ἄλλη λεγομένη εὐδαιμονία. Socrates’ casual and slightly sarcastic remark – the sarcasm emphasised by λεγομένη – harbours in reality an extraordinarily potent trio: (1) εὐδαιμονία, the compressed expression of the completely excellent condition of a human individual, remarkably suited to emphasise alike external and internal, subjective and objective; (2) κάλλος, beauty, the paradigmatic expression of *immediate* excellence, and an abstract noun corresponding to the adjective καλός, which has a wider extension better captured in the abstract τὸ καλόν;⁴⁹ (3) ἀρετή, the excellence especially associated with *functional* excellence, with use.⁵⁰ κάλλος is also in the *Charmides* the most immediately striking excellence of the eponymous interlocutor, the handsome and promising μεράκιον⁵¹ Charmides son of Glaukon, the cousin of Critias son of Callaeschrus.

⁴⁸ *Chrm.* 157e7–158a1. ⁴⁹ Ferrari’s reference (Ferrari, ‘Platonic love’, 252) to the wide semantic range of κάλλος is misleading as far as the noun goes, at least on the level of ordinary usage. Even Plato does not seem able to stretch its application beyond the realm of the sensible; κάλλος ψυχῆς and κάλλος ἐπιστήμης puts its emphasis on the striking immediacy of this quality. See also p. 17 below, with n. 78. ⁵⁰ Compare the close connection between ἀγαθόν and ὠφέλιμον often presupposed in the dialogues. ⁵¹ *Chrm.* 154a8 ἐν ἡλικίᾳ ὦν, 154b5 μεράκιον, 154d1 νεανίσκος, 155a4 νεανίας. Neither of these are, of course, as their interchangeability reveals, fixed or precise designations of age. Nails makes him ‘no more than seventeen’, mainly on account of his still requiring Critias as ἐπίτροπος (155a6), designating his date of birth as ±446 and following Planeaux (‘Socrates’) in locating the *Charmides* in May of 429 (Nails, *People*, 90–1, 311–12).

Passionate prologue

Charmides is introduced as an outstanding object of desire, hunted by packs of manic ἐρασταί about his own age, admired as an ἄγαλμα by even the children and the cause of slap-stick comedy among the older ensemble on the bench, in the words of the generally senseless Chaerephon: πάγκαλος τὸ εἶδος. Socrates is impressed, in spite of his lack of discriminatory powers concerning the beauty of those in their prime, and while initially retaining his self-control to the extent that he is able to observe the observers as Charmides makes his entrance, he is not untouched when the boy passes him an irresistible glance,⁵² and finally loses himself when he accidentally catches a glimpse of Charmides' naked body.⁵³ He manages however to go through with his scheme, to determine the condition of Charmides' soul (εἰ τὴν ψυχὴν ... τυγχάνει εὖ πεφυκώς⁵⁴) under the pretence of knowing a cure for headaches.

It is often remarked that even if the most prominent connotation of *sophrosyne* in Plato's own day – control or restraint of the passions – is absent from the explicit conversation of the *Charmides*, it hardly goes unnoticed behind the scenes.⁵⁵ The most prominent passion is ἔρως, but I would like to make a case as well for the possible hint at the passion for drinking. βαρύνεσθαι τι τὴν κεφαλὴν ἔωθεν ἀνιστάμενος 'to have a somewhat heavy head when getting up in the morning'⁵⁶ reminds one very much of a hangover, so that there might be one more layer of irony to Socrates' story of Thracian medicine (see below), as well as one more connotation of *sophrosyne* at play.⁵⁷ Schmid notes that there is 'no textual evidence to support this claim [i.e. that the headaches are caused by too much wine]',⁵⁸ which is true but which rules out neither the possibility that this *was* the cause nor that Socrates conceives of it as a possible cause and that his introduction of *sophrosyne* as a precondition for the cure might point the reader in the direction of this interpretation as a possibility. Interpreted in this way, Socrates may very well have learnt about a herbal remedy (φύλλον τι) for hangovers and would reasonably deny the ὄφελος resulting from it unless accompanied by the ἐπωδή (155e) which instils *sophrosyne* (here presumably in the sense of moderation in drink), especially if every human ἀγαθόν truly traces its origin to the ψυχὴ and if everything ὠφέλιμον is ἀγαθόν. A strikingly similar case is recounted in the *Republic*,⁵⁹ where Socrates by way of example refers to those who are ruled by ἀκολασία and refuse to change their ways, trusting in a simple φάρμακον, καύσις, τομὴ or ἐπωδή – here obviously not of the kind that awakens *sophrosyne* – to restore them to health; food, drink, sex and laziness are given as the efficient causes of their sickness.

⁵² ἐνέβλεψεν ... ἀμήχανον τι οἶον (155c8–d1); cf. ὡς ἄμαχον λέγετε τὸν ἄνδρα, εἰ ... (154d7). The natural reading of ἀμήχανον τι οἶον is 'too big for words', but I think the context allows us to entertain the notion of irresistibility as an undertone. ⁵³ 155d4. ⁵⁴ 154e1. ⁵⁵ See e.g. North, *Sophrosyne*, 154; Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic dialogue*, 187–8; Reece, 'Drama, narrative and eros', 68. ⁵⁶ *Chrm.* 155b4–5. ⁵⁷ Cf. Hyland, 41. ⁵⁸ Schmid, 175 n. 28. ⁵⁹ *R.* 425e8–426b2.

But there is no use denying that the main character at play in the prologue is ἔρω, which has the effect of dislocating one's normal sense of self: the crowds are ἐκπεληγμένοι τε καὶ τεθορυβημένοι. The common translation of this phrase as 'astonished and confused'⁶⁰ does not capture the intended sense and borders on a misunderstanding. ἐκπλήττεσθαι implies the loss of normal self-control on account of some shocking incident arousing violent passion, especially fear,⁶¹ but it is also used with eros as the logical subject.⁶² θορυβεῖσθαι in this context designates an upsetting or excitement of the soul, but not necessarily an aporia, and certainly not an intellectual one, but involving the passions.⁶³ In short, they were seized with passion and lost their heads, here described from the outside, but in all likelihood having the same experience as Socrates describes himself as having at the unexpected gap in Charmides' cloak: ἐφλεγόμην καὶ οὐκέτ' ἐν ἑαυτοῦ ἦν 'I was suddenly all ablaze and no longer able to keep a grip of myself'.⁶⁴ The idiomatic expression ἐν ἑαυτοῦ recalls expressions like εἰς/ἐν Ἄιδου, where one often, but not always, may supply οἴκῳ or equivalent, and which would render it 'within my own' or 'at home'.⁶⁵ It may, however, be more fortunate to compare it with similar expressions used in similar contexts: ἐντὸς ἑαυτοῦ, which we find in Herodotus, and the simple genitive of the reflexive pronoun with γίγνεσθαι; in these cases we must regard the genitive as partitive,⁶⁶ and may translate 'within myself'.⁶⁷ In general all of the expressions seem to imply self-control, composure, with the negated version as a pretty forceful expression for loss of composure, bor-

⁶⁰ 'they were so astonished and confused' (Sprague), 'such was their astonishment and confusion' (Lamb), 'amazement and confusion reigned' (Jowett) ⁶¹ See LSJ, s.v. ⁶² E.g. E. *Hipp.* 38–9: στένουσα κάκπεληγμένη | κέντροις ἔρωτος; *Med.* 8: ἔρωτι θυμὸν ἐκπλεγεισ' Ἰάσονος. Cf. also Pl. *Smp.* 211d4–9: τοὺς καλοὺς παῖδας τε καὶ νεανίσκους ... οὓς νῦν ὁρῶν ἐκπέληξαι καὶ ἔτομος εἶ ... μήτ' ἐσθίειν μήτε πίνειν, ἀλλὰ θεᾶσθαι μόνον καὶ συνεῖναι. ⁶³ Cf. Pl. *Lg.* 640a12: ὁ μὴν ἀνδρείος τῶν δειλῶν ὑπὸ φόβων ἦττον τεθορυβηται; also of the lover Hippothales in *Ly.* 210e5–6: ἀγωνιῶντα καὶ τεθορυβημένον ὑπὸ τῶν λεγομένων, equally mistranslated in my opinion as 'struggling with himself and thrown into confusion by what was being said' by Rowe and Penner (*Plato's Lysis*, 24), who unfortunately makes this reading part of an otherwise convincing argument for 'different levels of understanding on the part of the interlocutors' (37, original emphasis): ἀγωνιᾶν occurs only three other places in the corpus – *Chrm.* 162c1, *Prt.* 333e3 and *Amat.* 133a6 – in all of which it appears to convey that the subject is 'worked up' or 'agitated', because of something that happens or something that is said; in *Amat.* it occurs together with ἐκπλήττεσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν καλῶν. In none of the cases is there implied any intellectual confusion. As τεθορυβῆσθαι often refers to a similar experience, intellectual confusion should be ruled out, especially since the context calls for something else. Cf. also *Phdr.* 245b3: ... μηδέ τις ἡμᾶς λόγος θορυβεῖτω δεδιττόμενος ..., translated by Rowe as 'and let us not be alarmed by any argument that tries to frighten us' (Rowe (ed), *Plato: Phaedrus*). ⁶⁴ Reading them together it is hard not to notice striking similarities of description between the *Charmides* and the *Phaedrus*. Here with the ἀμήχανον glance and the resulting φλέγεσθαι, there ἰδὼν τὸ ἐρωτικὸν ὄμμα, πᾶσαν αἰσθήσει διαθερμήνας τὴν ψυχὴν ... (*Phdr.* 253e5–6). ⁶⁵ So LSJ, s.v. ἑαυτοῦ; McCabe, 13 n. 26; Newhall, 81 ('all out-of-doors'); Mitchell, 139 (commenting on Ar. *V.* 642). ⁶⁶ Chantraine (104) proposes that also the ἐν + gen. may be an original partitive genitive. ⁶⁷ None of these idioms are in widespread use in the classical and pre-classical literature that we possess (Rowe's comment (*Plato: Phaedrus*, ad loc. 250a7) that ἐν αὐτῶν γίγνεσθαι would be the 'common idiom' in contrast to αὐτῶν γίγνεσθαι makes one wonder wonder about his sources). For the bare ἑαυτοῦ, see S. *O.C.* 659–60. (verse bracketed by some editors), Pl. *Phdr.* 250a7 (several editors have accepted Hirschig's <ἐν> αὐτῶν), D. 2.30, 4.7; ἐντὸς ἑαυτοῦ, Hdt. 1.119, 7.47; ἐν ἑαυτοῦ, S. *Ph.* 950 (v.l. ἐν σαυτῷ), Ar. *V.* 642 (v.l. ἐν αὐτῷ), Men. *Aspis*, 306–7.

dering on temporary insanity.⁶⁸

In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates – in his second speech on love – has already categorised ἔρως as a form of μανία when we receive a description of the reaction of those souls which have a sufficient (buried) memory of κάλλος ἀληθές, when they perceive its likeness in a human body: ἐκπλήττονται καὶ οὐκέτ' <ἐν> αὐτῶν γίνονται.⁶⁹ Erotic μανία is contrasted with the sensible ἀνθρωπίνη σωφροσύνη, which was praised in Lysias' speech and Socrates' first speech, where it is emphasised that the lover experiences a loss of self-identity (μὴ πράττων ταῦτα τῷ πρόσθεν ὁμοίος τε ἐκείνῳ καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς πάλιν γένηται⁷⁰). In the second speech the emphasis is rather upon the positive value of erotic madness if the receiving soul is in the right condition. The ἐκπληξίς is explained as the result of bodily beauty instigating recollection, ἀνάμνησις, of *true* κάλλος, the hyperuranian being perceived by every human soul prior to its incarnation. The charge of μανία is explained as the result of the lover's neglect of τὰ κάτω, earthly matters, which fade into nothingness when compared to the truth of hyperurania. We can compare the behaviour of the ordinary pederast in the closing paragraphs of Diotima's speech, who ἐκπέπληκται and will not eat or drink until compelled by his mortal condition, but rather only θεᾶσθαι τὰ παιδικὰ καὶ συνεῖναι,⁷¹ observe and stay with his beloved; this urge to disregard the demands of ordinary life does not abate in ὁ ὀρθῶς ἐπὶ τὰ ἐρωτικά ἐλθὼν, who in the end will make αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν his παιδικὰ. And while the necessity of an inborn φιλόσοφος φύσις is not explicit in Diotima's description of the proper lover, this is stressed in the *Republic's* account of the philosopher, who will need both the appropriate φύσις and the correct παιδαγωγία.⁷² In the *Republic*, as well, Socrates suggests the appropriateness of the insult μετεωροσκόπος as applied to the philosopher,⁷³ and explains, by way of the near-blind, near-deaf skipper (the δῆμος⁷⁴) and his crew (the politicians), that the philosophers are at best considered ἄχρηστοι by the many because of the exclusive focus upon internal rivalry among the latter.⁷⁵ The second speech of the *Phaedrus* thus retains the notion of a change in the self, but this time it is portrayed as the beginning of a change of the soul *back* into its original condition, its winged state. This is what Dodds meant when he wrote that ἔρως 'makes the one empirical bridge between man as he is and man as he might be'.⁷⁶

Back in the palaistra, Socrates gets drawn into the conversation with Charmides and soon regains his composure. The external flame (ἐφλεγόμεν) which threatened to consume him is exchanged for the fire of life (ἀνεζωπυρούμεν), and he embarks on his Thracian story, which

⁶⁸ Men. *Aspis*, 306–7 interestingly has μελαγχολῶ τοῖς πράγμασιν· μὰ τοὺς θεοὺς, | οὐκ εἴμ' ἐν ἑμᾶντοῦ, μαίνομαι δ' ἀκαρὴς πάννυ. ⁶⁹ *Phdr.* 250a6–7. De Vries, *ad loc.* rightly calls the second conjunct an epexegetis. This reaction is ascribed to those who see the ὁμοίωμα of *any* hyperuranian being, but the paradigmatic case is obviously that of beauty. ⁷⁰ *Phdr.* 241b2–3. ⁷¹ *Smp.* 211d7. ⁷² *R.* 491e2. ⁷³ *R.* 488e4, cf. 489c6. ⁷⁴ Cf. Adam, II, *ad. loc.* 488a7. ⁷⁵ *R.* 488a–489c. ⁷⁶ See p. 4.

introduces the notion of the soul as the *primus motor* of good and evil for man as such:

πάντα γὰρ ἔφη ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς ὥρμησθαι καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ τῷ σώματι καὶ παντὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἐπιρρεῖν ὥσπερ ἐκ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἐπὶ τὰ ὄμματα· δεῖν οὖν ἐκεῖνο καὶ πρῶτον καὶ μάλιστα θεραπεύειν, εἰ μέλλει καὶ τὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς καὶ τὰ τοῦ ἄλλου σώματος καλῶς ἔχειν. θεραπεύεσθαι δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν ἔφη, ὦ μακάριε, ἐπωδαῖς τισιν, τὰς δ' ἐπωδὰς ταύτας τοὺς λόγους εἶναι τοὺς καλοὺς· ἐκ δὲ τῶν τοιούτων λόγων ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς σωφροσύνην ἐγγίγνεσθαι, ἥς ἐγγενομένης καὶ παρούσης ῥάδιον ἤδη εἶναι τὴν ὑγίειαν καὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ καὶ τῷ ἄλλῳ σώματι πορίζειν.⁷⁷

He said that indeed everything has its origin in the soul, both evil and good, for the body and for the whole human being, wherefrom it flows even as it flows from the head to the eyes. Hence one needs to treat the soul first and most of all, if both the head and the rest of the body parts are to reach a good condition. And he said that the soul is treated with certain charms, and that these charms are the καλοὶ λόγοι, from which sophrosyne comes to be in the souls. Its coming-to-be and presence makes it an easy thing to procure health for both the head and the rest of the body.

The first point to remark upon is the holism which is recommended, the primacy of the whole over the parts, and the fact that the soul comes across as more than simply one of the parts of man. It appears to be the first principle of man, the ἀρχή, if not of his existence as such, then of his normative condition, of good and bad. Both the holism and the concept of the soul as a unifying principle look ahead to the discussion of ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτῆς καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν καὶ ἀνεπιστημοσυνῶν later on. The soul like all things can be better or worse; its well-being is its health and it needs tending (θεραπεία) if it is to attain and remain in a state of health. What health (ὑγίεια) is to the body, sophrosyne is to the soul. Socrates is already airing the idea that sophrosyne is a quality of the soul, which, if true, from the outset excludes Charmides' first definition, insofar as his ἡσυχιότης (calmness) functions as a predicate of actions and not of the soul.

There is also a certain irony at play which affects the status of Charmides' beauty. Even if it is the 'inner' condition of the body which is in question here and not its outward appearance, there is a sense in which Charmides' outward radiance risks being exposed as an empty shell. If his headache is the result of badness flowing from soul through body as such into the head, his body does not καλῶς ἔχειν, which within the context refers exclusively to health, but which might just as well apply to its appearance and stature. And even if the inference from σῶμα καλῶς ἔχον to καλὸν σῶμα (in the sense of beautiful) or καλὸς τὸ σῶμα is not valid as far as 'everyday language' is concerned, Plato's Socrates is not renowned for sticking to the principles of everyday language in such matters. Plato the philosopher is conscious of the form of word

⁷⁷ 156e6–157b1.

and language in a way not open to the ‘ordinary man,’ who remains absorbed in its function.⁷⁸

Finally there are the καλοὶ λόγοι, which I have chosen to leave untranslated, as any rendering in English would restrict the phrase beyond its intention. As they are not mentioned again in the dialogue, it is easy to conclude that they must refer to Socratic conversation of the kind illustrated in the remainder of the work,⁷⁹ perhaps too easy. A digression on love will decide.

Excursus on ἔρως

In the *Symposium*, the wise Diotima, as related by Socrates via Aristodemus and Apollodorus,⁸⁰ reveals that the *universal* concept of ἔρως has a two-fold object: It is a desire (1) to possess τὸ ἀγαθόν and (2) to possess it always. The latter easily translates into a desire for ἀθανασία, immortality, the precondition for eternal possession. Why then the common perception that ἔρως is directed towards τὸ καλόν? Because there exists only one route to immortality for what is by nature mortal: reproduction. The beautiful is not desired for itself, but for its suitability as a medium of reproduction. Hence the mortal ἔρως longs for γέννησις καὶ τόκος ἐν καλῷ, i.e. mortal immortality, and in this sense everyone is pregnant (ἐγκύμων); this is the *specific* concept of ἔρως. The desire for immortality is the logical consequence of the nature of the good, which is to confer εὐδαιμονία upon the one who ‘possesses’ it. But as Aristotle aptly put it, μία χελιδὼν ἔαρ οὐ ποιεῖ, οὐδὲ μία ἡμέρα. The element of time necessarily implied in εὐδαιμονία expands into immortality, but immortality of the mortal kind, immortality based on self-renewal and reproduction.

This specific ἔρως thus becomes the telic form of the universal concept of ἔρως, its logical consummation. Diotima says, τοὺς μὲν ... ἀνθρώπους ... οἷοιτ’ ἂν τις ἐκ λογισμοῦ ταῦτα ποιεῖν

⁷⁸ I agree with Alexander Nehemas to the extent that to the *interpreter* of the *Charmides* there is a certain conspicuousness to Socrates’ ‘having just associated kalos so strongly with sexual excitement and the loss of self-control’ before going on ‘without a moment’s hesitation to use the same word to describe the virtue of self-control itself’ (Nehemas, ‘Beauty of body’, 100), although I believe it would be perfectly natural to a reader of the Greek text to overlook this ‘extraordinarily stark’ contrast. Hence I would maintain that even the adverb καλῶς may be noticed by the philosophical interpreter (*contra* Nehemas: ‘I assume that the use of the adverb kalōs at 156a9 is too conventional to carry any specific semantic weight’ (100 n. 20)); for a display of Socrates exploiting the formal connection of the adverb καλῶς with the rest of the word group, see *Alc.* 1, 116b1 ff. Moreover, Nehemas’s criticism of Dover’s restriction that ‘the word, when applied to a person, means “beautiful”, “pretty”, “handsome”, “attractive”’ (Dover, *Symposium*, 2) does not take into account that Dover most likely made his statement on the basis of ‘popular morality’ and ordinary usage as in his more comprehensive work (Dover, *Greek popular morality*). Thus neither the quotation of Pindar nor the language of Plato invalidates the claim of Dover. ⁷⁹ E.g. Tuckey, 18–19: ‘The καλοὶ λόγοι ... clearly refer to the Socratic method of ἔλεγχος whereby he convinced men of their own ignorance and of the necessity of ψυχῆς ἐπιμέλεια, the essential prerequisite of virtue.’ Similarly Reece, ‘Drama, narrative and eros’, 72, 74. ⁸⁰ Although Apollodorus admits to having confirmed some details of the story with Socrates (*Smp.* 173b4–6). Then again the written edition of the story pushes us even further away from the actual event.

‘One might think that *humans* do these things out of reasoning.’⁸¹ However, as she goes on to point out, the impulse is not confined to humans, but is shared with other living creatures, even those without the capacity for reasoning. This fact attests to the pre-reflective character of ἔρως, the primordially which makes it so important to Platonic thought. Reading the *Symposium* alongside dialogues such as the *Meno*, the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*, one is struck by the silence surrounding the mortality status of the ψυχή as such, which in the other works are portrayed as truly immortal. For one must remark the careful stipulation by which Diotima portrays κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν οἱ τρόποι, τὰ ἥθη, δόξαι, ἐπιθυμίας, ἡδοναί, λύπαι, φόβοι ... καὶ αἱ ἐπιστήμαι⁸² as of mortal stock, but not αὐτὴ ἡ ψυχή. In fact, ἔρως seems to be the one psychic element which is represented as ontologically prior to the mortal condition and as its precondition, while being simultaneously tied to temporality.

But let us return to the distinction between universal and specific ἔρως. Socrates is perplexed at Diotimas’ question about what one will *have* when one has gained possession of τὰ καλά, but has no difficulty identifying εὐδαιμονία as the welcome result of acquiring τὰ ἀγαθά.⁸³ We may surmise that this is because there is no obvious utility attached to τὸ καλόν, unless one considers being held in high esteem as a useful consequence, a ‘good’ contributing to one’s εὐδαιμονία. But in this case we may ask why the possession of καλά is an object of admiration. The social virtues are explainable as contributing to the good of all, in which case, insofar as they are considered καλά, τὸ καλόν will be reduced to an ἀγαθόν. Admiration at one’s having won the favour of a καλός *person* is not reducible in this way and could point to the true basis of the connection between τὸ καλόν and τιμή. Or rather, it could point out that this basis is hard to comprehend, or perhaps better, hard to *explain* by the use of λόγος. In the *Phaedrus*-speech, τὰ τίμια seem to be co-referential with τὰ ἐραστά, while κάλλος appears as a subcategory of these.⁸⁴ But it seems clear that the concept of κάλλος employed by Diotima in the *Symposium* is more comprehensive than that which Socrates uses in the *Phaedrus*. Diotima mentions κάλλος ψυχῆς, κάλλος ἐπιτηδεύματος and κάλλος ἐπιστήμης,⁸⁵ but notably refrains from speaking about the form in terms of κάλλος, using instead αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν. In contrast, Socrates in the *Phaedrus* praises αὐτὸ τὸ κάλλος,⁸⁶ while the very fact that δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη and φρόνησις are explicitly distinguished from κάλλος attests to the more ‘ordinary’ use of this noun as compared with its application to soul, practice and knowledge in the other dialogue, where it necessarily takes on a more metaphorical hue.⁸⁷ Nor is καλός used of anything else than the physical shape

⁸¹ *Smp.* 207b6–7. ⁸² *Smp.* 207e2–5. ⁸³ *Smp.* 204d–e. ⁸⁴ See *Phdr.* 250b1ff., d3–e1. ⁸⁵ *Smp.* 210b7, 210d2–3, 210c7. ⁸⁶ *Phdr.* 250e2; cf. 249d5, 250b5, c8–d1. ⁸⁷ R. M. Dancy points out that Socrates has a ‘common habit of referring to what he wants to define using generically abstract noun phrases such as “the pious” or “the beautiful” instead of the abstract nouns “piety” or “beauty”’ (77). I contend that in the particular case of κάλλος/καλόν this is more than a habit, although it might be that *as well*.

of the beloved in the *Phaedrus*-speech. As the context in the *Phaedrus* is the arguably more poetic of the two, the difference may be traced to the difference in function between the two concepts in the two speeches. In the *Phaedrus*, we are presented with κάλλος as a ὑπόμνημα, a reminder, as either a necessary or at least a sufficient condition for remembering the existence of true being beyond the world; and if it is only a sufficient condition, it is at least a shortcut compared to the long road by way of ἀμυδρὰ ὄργανα. On the hyperuranian field of truth the true κάλλος is one among all the true beings, of which are explicitly mentioned δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη and ἐπιστήμη.⁸⁸ Certainly κάλλος is conspicuous even there – it was λαμπρὸν ἰδεῖν and μετ' ἐκείνων ἔλαμπεν ὄν⁸⁹ – although the particular effect this may have on the other *forms* is not elaborated, and it is not obvious that this conspicuousness makes it more lovable, as Socrates implies that an ἔρως for φρόνησις would be deeper than for κάλλος, had it only shared in the latter's brightness. For κάλλος stands apart in being the only form the light (φέγγος) of which shines through even in the this-worldly ὁμοιώματα. In the *Symposium* by contrast the grasp of αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν is described as the primary goal and final end. Hence we might say that the κάλλος of the *Phaedrus* does not make the explicit connection between κάλλος as physical beauty and τὸ καλόν as the universal form of τὸ πολὺ πέλαγος τοῦ καλοῦ.⁹⁰

Diotima, as we have seen, idiosyncratically explains our desire for the beautiful in terms of utility. We desire it as a medium of reproduction. But one wonders what makes the beautiful especially suitable for reproduction. She explains: ἀνάρμοστον ... ἐστὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν παντὶ τῷ θεῷ, τὸ δὲ καλὸν ἀρμόττον 'the ugly is unfitting for the divine in its totality, while the beautiful is fitting'.⁹¹ The immediate referent of τὸ θεῖον is κύησις and γέννησις, pregnancy and birth, as their connection with immortality marks them as divine. But how are we to conceive of this 'explanation'?⁹² The beautiful becomes the fountain of youth, because it *befits* the divine nature of the act of reproduction, its essential touch of immortality. One is hard put to find a more 'logical' explanation for this fact in the *Symposium*. But it will not hurt to try. ἀνάρμοστον in this sentence certainly means 'not fitting to', but the word also bears the connotation 'badly fitted together, unharmonious'.⁹³ Similarly ἀρμόττον here means 'befitting', although it may be construed in other contexts as 'making fit, organising'.⁹⁴ The καλόν certainly 'attunes' its pregnant lover, who at once ἱλεών τε γίγνεται καὶ εὐφραϊνόμενον διαχεῖται καὶ τίκτει τε καὶ γεννᾷ 'becomes friendly and joyfully relaxes and gives birth and reproduces'.⁹⁵ And at all stages of human love where the lover refrains from simple rape the καλόν inspires the creation of καλοὶ λόγοι by the lover, the κάλλος of which we must infer itself attunes the beloved and attempts

⁸⁸ *Phdr.* 247d6–7. ⁸⁹ *Phdr.* 250b5–6, d1. ⁹⁰ *Smp.* 210d4. ⁹¹ *Smp.* 206c8–d1. ⁹² Price says it 'seems extraneous, and sophistical' (*Love and friendship*, 17). ⁹³ See e.g. *R.* 400d3, as antonym of εὐάρμοστον. ⁹⁴ Cf. the soul as ἡρμωσμένη at *R.* 554e4; similarly 410e10, 443e2; also the tuning of λύρα and ἀρμονία at *R.* 349e10 and 591d2 (ἀρμόττεσθαι). ⁹⁵ *Smp.* 206d4–5.

to bring him to true harmony. The *Phaedrus* explains how this becomes a reciprocal process of gradually intensified love, where κάλλος in the portable, transferrable form of ἕμερος flows from beloved into lover and back from where it came;⁹⁶ similarly how the lover οἷον ἄγαλμα τεκταίνεται τε καὶ κατακοσμεῖ his beloved, making him more harmonious, more κόσμιος, more καλός, but growing himself in nobility of soul with the task.⁹⁷ Similarly in the *Symposium* we find that the advanced lover is strengthened and fattened (ῥωσθεὶς καὶ αὐξηθεὶς) by his unrestrained intercourse with philosophy.⁹⁸ Diotima's philosophical lover turns from the beauty of *a* body to the beauty of body as such, convinced of the essential unity of all carnal beauty. This turns him into a lover of *all* bodies. As this noble lover hunts his his pray with καλοὶ λόγοι, we may conjecture that it is his discursive interaction with a number of beautiful boys which calls to his attention a distributive difference in response to his discourse, which again spurs him on to consider the beauty of soul, τιμιώτερον as it were from that of the body. We note that there is no shift from the beauty of *a* soul to that of soul as such, and when we get a recapitulation of the ladder in 211c3, the soul is conspicuously missing. At this stage, in an attempt to improve the soul of his beloved, he is compelled to attend to the beauty of customs (ἐπιτηδεύματα, νόμοι) – what *is* the proper way of living? what customs make the soul better? – the pursuit of which again makes him aware of the beauty of knowledge (ἐπιστήμαι) – what distinguishes proper knowledge of customs from improper? – until he hits upon the ἐπιστήμη αὐτοῦ τοῦ καλοῦ, which, if anything is to qualify, may be worthy of the title ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστημῶν καὶ ἀνεπιστημοσυνῶν or at least a result of the pursuit of such wisdom.

The lover's attention may finally reach the form itself, once he has gone from becoming *aware* of this ἐπιστήμη as a possible object of pursuit to making it his own. But when he thus stands contemplating the meadow of truth or even lifts his mind's eye to its ἀρχή – if we may compare αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν to ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα in the *Republic*, considering the other ἐπιστήμαι as directed toward the particular forms, the one, toward the source of their appearance as forms; in this case we may perhaps also juxtapose the ἐπαναβασμοὶ of the *Symposium* and the ἐπιβάσεις in the *Republic's* Analogy of the divided line⁹⁹ – when the successful lover thus contemplates his newfound beauty, what does he beget? οὐκ εἰδῶλα ἀρετῆς ... ἀλλὰ ἀληθῆ,¹⁰⁰ not images of virtue but the true virtue. Considering the lack of information about what happened to the noble soul which set this train of psychological events in motion – it is apparently not trodden under foot as a simple ἐπαναβασμός – would it be completely wrong to suggest that he never leaves the lover's side, and that this newly discovered true virtue goes on to be implanted in his soul and nourished *there*? This would make the story fit both with the account of the philosophical couple in the *Phaedrus*, and the Allegory of the cave in the *Republic*. αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν

⁹⁶ *Phdr.* 251c5 ff., 255b7 ff. ⁹⁷ *Phdr.* 252d5 ff. ⁹⁸ *Smp.* 210d3–7. ⁹⁹ *R.* 511b6. ¹⁰⁰ *Smp.* 212a4–5.

emerges as the ἀρμοστής of all and everything, a true παγκοσμητής.

Charmides searches his soul

This glimpse inside Platonic ἔρως-theory – if these more or less mythical accounts can be called theory – gives us a potentially fuller picture of the reference to καλοὶ λόγοι in the *Charmides*. In the *Symposium* we find καλοὶ λόγοι delivered by the proper lover at almost every stage of his pursuit, and although it is not explicitly pointed out, we must understand that the truth of their beauty/fittingness/nobility intensifies as the lover himself approaches the true καλόν. Neither would it be completely off the mark, I think, to think of this climb towards truth as a shift from more or less purely ‘physical’ beauty to true nobility, to use this word for convenience: The first λόγοι can be thought of as speeches designed to allure the beautiful boy, with an emphasis on rhetoric in its common connotation. In the *Phaedrus*-speech there is no mention of καλοὶ λόγοι, but we must remember that the speech itself is supposed to be an example of one, and so in this dialogue as well there is a shift from speech cleverly designed to trick the παιδικά into giving up his ‘favour’, lavishly adorned with rhetorical finesse and contemptuous of the truth, to ‘didactic’ speech primarily directed toward the truth, although no one would deny the pure beauty of Socrates’ second speech. Finally Socrates and Phaedrus become immersed in a discourse *on* the appropriateness of λόγοι – spoken as well as written (τὸν λόγον ὅπη καλῶς ἔχει λέγειν τε καὶ γράφειν καὶ ὅπη μὴ, σκεπτέον¹⁰¹) – and could not this be interpreted as an instance of the turn from ἐπιτηδεύματα to ἐπιστῆμαι? The real example, however, is the one we find in the *Lysis*, where Socrates enters into conversation with Lysis and Menexenus with the avowed intention of showing the lover Hippothales how to converse with his beloved so as to make him εὐάλωτος rather than δυσάλωτος.¹⁰² At the end of his first encounter with Lysis, he almost says aloud, οὕτω χρή, ὦ Ἰππόθαλες, τοῖς παιδικοῖς διαλέγεσθαι, ταπεινοῦντα καὶ συστέλλοντα, ἀλλὰ μὴ ὥσπερ σὺ χαννοῦντα καὶ διαθρύπτοντα ‘this, Hippothales, is the way to converse with your beloved, humbling him and cutting him down to size, not as you do, puffing him up and spoiling him.’¹⁰³ Socrates has just forced Lysis to admit that he has no reason to be μεγαλόφρων, have high thoughts, as long as he is ἄφρων, lacking in wisdom.¹⁰⁴ This would stand as a prime example of instilling *sophrosyne* in the common sense, making the youngster aware of his own limitations (γινῶναι ἑαυτοῦ) and thus respecting his elders and betters (αἰδώς). But the conversation in the *Lysis* goes on to question the concept of φιλία on the basis of which this argument was made, and in the end even questions the concept of ἔρως

¹⁰¹ *Phdr.* 259e1–2. ¹⁰² See. *Ly.* 206a6–10. The procedure is even referred to as λόγοις καὶ ψδαῖς κηλεῖν (206b2).

¹⁰³ *Ly.* 210e2–5. ¹⁰⁴ *Ly.* 210d7–8.

on which the conversation as a whole was founded.

At the end of the *Charmides* the eponymous interlocutor hints that he considers the ἐπωδή to be the Socratic conversation,¹⁰⁵ but he does not spell it out in so many words, and Socrates remains silent on the subject. The obvious conclusion is that Charmides just as Lysis through the conversation with Socrates has learnt sophrosyne as self-knowledge in the sense of awareness of his own ignorance. One is reminded of Socrates' ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία in the *Apology* which consists in ἐγνώκεναι ὅτι οὐδενὸς ἄξιός ἐστι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πρὸς σοφίαν 'knowing that one in truth is of no value when it comes to wisdom'.¹⁰⁶ And Socrates' lamentation towards the end of the *Charmides* sports a superficial semblance to his apology in court – δικαίως ἐμαυτὸν ἡτιώμην ὅτι οὐδὲν χρηστὸν περὶ σωφροσύνης σκοπῶ 'I justly accused myself of conducting the investigation of sophrosyne without a trace of expertise'¹⁰⁷; σοι συμβουλεύσαιμι {ἄν} ἐμὲ ... λῆρον ἡγεῖσθαι εἶναι καὶ ἀδύνατον λόγῳ ὅτι οὖν ζητεῖν 'I would advise you to hold me for a fool and as unable to seek out anything by way of reasoning'¹⁰⁸ – but on closer inspection he would rather seem to be criticising even his modest claim to self-knowledge in the *Apology*, or perhaps rather questioning the conditions for its possibility:

οὐ δυνάμεθα εὐρεῖν ἐφ' ὅτῳ ποτὲ τῶν ὄντων ὁ νομοθέτης τοῦτο τοῦνομα ἔθετο, τὴν σωφροσύνην. καίτοι πολλά γε συνεχωρήκαμεν οὐ συμβαίνονθ' ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ λόγῳ. καὶ γὰρ ἐπιστήμην ἐπιστήμης εἶναι συνεχωρήσαμεν, οὐκ ἑώντος τοῦ λόγου οὐδὲ φάσκοντος εἶναι· καὶ ταύτῃ αὖ τῇ ἐπιστήμῃ καὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν ἔργα γινώσκειν συνεχωρήσαμεν, οὐδὲ τοῦτ' ἑώντος τοῦ λόγου, ἵνα δὴ ἡμῖν γένοιτο ὁ σώφρων ἐπιστήμων ὧν τε οἶδεν ὅτι οἶδεν, καὶ ὧν μὴ οἶδεν ὅτι οὐκ οἶδεν. τοῦτο μὲν δὴ καὶ παντάπασι μεγαλοπρεπῶς συνεχωρήσαμεν, οὐδ' ἐπισκεψάμενοι τὸ ἀδύνατον εἶναι ἃ τις μὴ οἶδεν μηδαμῶς, ταῦτα εἰδέναι ἀμῶς γέ πως· ὅτι γὰρ οὐκ οἶδεν, φησὶν αὐτὰ εἰδέναι ἢ ἡμετέρα ὁμολογία. καίτοι, ὡς ἐγώ μαι, οὐδενὸς ὅτου οὐχὶ ἀλογώτερον τοῦτ' ἂν φανείη.¹⁰⁹

We are not able to discover to whatever being the lawgiver applied this term, sophrosyne. This in spite of our having granted a lot which did not follow from the argument. For we granted that there is knowledge of knowledge, even when the argument neither allowed it nor agreed to it. We moreover granted that this knowledge knows even the objects of the other knowledges, again without the argument allowing it, just so that we should have the sophron knowing about what he knows, that he knows it, and about what he does not know, that he does not know it. And in granting this we really made a magnificent display of generosity, without stopping to consider that it is impossible to somehow know what one does not know at all – for our agreement maintains that he knows that he does not know them. But in my opinion there is nothing which would not appear less illogical than this.

It should be noted that Charmides says he does not believe Socrates when he says he is unable to discover the truth about sophrosyne,¹¹⁰ and we should of course be alert to Socratic irony,

¹⁰⁵ *Chrm.* 176b1 ff. ¹⁰⁶ *Ap.* 20d8, 23b3–4. ¹⁰⁷ *Chrm.* 175a10–11. ¹⁰⁸ *Chrm.* 176a2–4. ¹⁰⁹ *Chrm.* 175b3–c8.

¹¹⁰ *Chrm.* 176a7–b1.

but if Socrates knows more about sophrosyne and perhaps more about how it *would* be possible to know what one does not know, he does not let it on, and we would have to turn to the *Meno* to discover it.¹¹¹ There in fact he insists quite earnestly that he is just as smitten with ἀπορία as his interlocutors,¹¹² but goes on to say, ὁρᾷς τοῦτον ὡς ἐριστικὸν λόγον κατάγεις, ὡς οὐκ ἄρα ἔστιν ζητεῖν ἀνθρώπῳ οὔτε ὁ οἶδε οὔτε ὁ μὴ οἶδε; ‘Do you see what kind of eristic argument you are bringing in, that it is possible for a man to seek for neither what he knows nor what he does not know?’¹¹³ The impossible becomes possible, we know, through the doctrine of recollection. If anything, ἐπιστήμη is used in two different senses: The immortal soul knows everything because it has seen (ἑώρακυῖα) and thereby learnt (μεμάθηκεν) everything.¹¹⁴ But the incarnated soul is subject to forgetfulness, and what we call μάθησις is really ἀνάμνησις.¹¹⁵ Thus we *always* know₁ what we have not yet recollected, which we *say* we know₂ once we have recollected it. The first sense of knowledge is the condition for the possibility of our being aware of not knowing in the second sense, but this awareness itself must be counted as a third member, and it must be sparked, we conjecture, by a ὑπόμνημα of the kind represented by κάλλος in the *Phaedrus*. There the lovers ἐκπλήττονται καὶ οὐκέτ’ <έν> αὐτῶν γίνονται, as we remember from the discussion above,¹¹⁶ ὁ δ’ ἔστι τὸ πάθος ἀγνοοῦσι διὰ τὸ μὴ ἱκανῶς διαισθάνεσθαι ‘but they do not know what they experience because they don’t perceive clearly enough [the true beings they still retain a faint memory of]’.¹¹⁷ Can we not compare this ἐκπληξις to the Socratic ἀπορία, which Meno likens to the numbing by a νάρκη, a stingray?

This opens up the possibility that even Socrates’ experience with Charmides’ cloak may hide more than it lets on, and McCabe’s question does not sound so fanciful: What is it really that Socrates’ catches sight of inside the cloak?¹¹⁸ There is also the verb ἀνεξωπυρούμεν, mentioned above, rekindling the flame of ζωή, which is incarnated life. Although this might be to go *too* continental, there is no harm in thinking of the section of the *Symposium* where ζῆν is the earthly life where the ζῶον is called τὸ αὐτό but in fact changes continually.¹¹⁹ Combined with the manic story in the *Phaedrus*, let us entertain the thought that it was in the instance of erotic μανία – the cloak episode – that Socrates got in touch with his true self, while the ἀναζωπύρωσις represents his return to common sense.

¹¹¹ Where, interestingly, Meno himself accuses Socrates of γοητεύειν, φαρμάττειν, κατεπάδειν (*Men.* 80a2–3), and where he complains about being infected with Socrates’ ἀπορία even when before μυριάκις γε περὶ ἀρετῆς παμπόλλους λόγους εἶρηκα καὶ πρὸς πολλούς, καὶ πάνυ εἶ, ὥς γε ἑμαυτῷ ἐδόκουν (80b2–3). ¹¹² *Men.* 80c8–d1.

¹¹³ *Men.* 80e1–3. ¹¹⁴ *Men.* 81c5–7. ¹¹⁵ *Men.* 81d2–3. ¹¹⁶ See p. 16. ¹¹⁷ *Phdr.* 250a7–b1. ¹¹⁸ Cf. McCabe, 12 ff. ¹¹⁹ *Smp.* 207d4 ff.

Sophrosyne as ἡσυχιότης

As the only function of the ἐπιδείξις is to instill sophrosyne, the next step is to find out whether or not Charmides already possesses the prized quality of soul. Critias breaks in and answers in the affirmative, πάνυ πολὺ δοκεῖ σωφρονέστατος εἶναι τῶν νυνὶ ὅς of all his contemporaries he appears to be the most sophron by far,¹²⁰ where we should not, I think, attach too much importance to δοκεῖ as ‘seeming’. Socrates picks up on this praise and launches into a full-fledged encomium of Charmides’ ancestors, following the example of Hippothales’ practice before Socrates shows up in the *Lysis*, the very procedure which he there criticises for φρονήματος ἐμπιπλάναι {τὰ παιδικὰ} καὶ μεγαλαυχίας.¹²¹ However, the litmus test is whether Charmides himself will agree to possessing the virtue or not. He shows prudence and says he does not know how to answer such a question directly. Socrates suggests an indirect route: If sophrosyne is present for him (παρεῖναι), i.e. in him (ἐνεῖναι), it must afford a perception (αἴσθησις), on the basis of which he would have an opinion (δόξα) about what it is and of what kind.¹²² Presumably, he could have an opinion of it even without possessing it, so the question is whether this perception would of necessity render his δόξα any more true than if it were not present, but this question cannot be answered until the nature of sophrosyne itself becomes clearer. In effect, we must conclude that this initial question implies a principle which must itself be confirmed by a sort of hermeneutical process, hence Socrates’ apt expression, ἵνα τοπάσωμεν.¹²³

Charmides’ first definition of sophrosyne is τὸ κοσμίως πάντα πράττειν καὶ ἡσυχῇ ... καὶ ... συλλήβδην ἡσυχιότης τις εἶναι ‘to do everything in an orderly and quietly, and to be in short a certain quietness’.¹²⁴ It has often enough been pointed out that Socrates goes on to ignore κοσμίως,¹²⁵ and he chooses to focus on the particular connotation of ἡσυχιότης as ‘slowness’. I think Santas is correct in suggesting that this choice of Socrates indicates that it is not κοσμίως which poses a problem,¹²⁶ and I disagree with those who hold that this is an ‘arbitrary’ interpretation.¹²⁷ ἡσύχιος excludes ταχύς, as applied to one and the same action, even if it is more than simply just its opposite, so this (necessary) aspect of ἡσυχιότης is all Socrates needs to show that this definition of sophrosyne is faulty, given that sophrosyne is always καλόν, while in some cases ἡσυχιότης in action is less καλόν than ταχυτής, hence it is not strictly καλόν, as

¹²⁰ *Chrm.* 157d6–7. ¹²¹ *Ly.* 206a4; cf. 205c2–d4. ¹²² *Chrm.* 158e7–159a3. ¹²³ *Chrm.* 159a9. ¹²⁴ *Chrm.* 159b3–5. ¹²⁵ E.g. Heitsch, 10. Santas points out that it is really Charmides himself which ‘drops’ κοσμίως (113 n. 7), but this only reflects Santas’ strange choice to categorise this first utterance on the subject as two separate definitions (108). In my opinion, κοσμίως πάντα πράττειν καὶ ἡσυχῇ, with the example of walking and talking, is Charmides’ key to disambiguate the otherwise ambiguous ἡσυχιότης. ¹²⁶ Santas, 113 n. 7. ¹²⁷ So in Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic dialogue*, 189 n. 11. Again Santas, who writes: ‘Why compare quietly with quickly? They are certainly not exclusive of each other, else what the safe-cracker and the burglar aim at would not be simply difficult but logically impossible.’ (115) ‘Quietly’ may not be exclusive of ‘quickly’, but ἡσύχιος is.

it ‘partakes’ in the αἰσχρόν (to borrow an expression from the ‘middle’ dialogues).¹²⁸

I do not understand the great fuzz about the alleged fallacies of this argument, which seems to me perfectly sound. Socrates does nowhere claim that *sophrosyne* is ταχυτής,¹²⁹ nor does he really say that it is more *sophron* than ἡσυχιότης as such,¹³⁰ only that it is not *less* so.¹³¹ Even the fact that ἡσυχιότης τις could mean ‘a certain *kind* of ἡσυχιότης’ does not avoid the exclusion of ταχυτής when applied to action (and even if applied to a person one would not say that he is both ἡσύχιος and ταχύς of *character*, but perhaps with the former applied to character, the latter to physical ability).

If we are to accept Socrates’ earlier indications that *sophrosyne* is a quality of the soul, Charmides’ primary error is that he defines it as a quality of *action*. For even though the abstract ἡσυχιότης could well be a quality of the soul,¹³² this is clearly not how he intends it. His use of κοσμίως is interesting, insofar as it is an important aspect of *sophrosyne* in the *Gorgias*, and a defining feature of *sophrosyne* in the *Republic*. It is moreover noteworthy that neither Socrates nor Charmides has any qualms about taking for granted an aspect of what *kind* of thing (ὁποῖόν τι) *sophrosyne* is, namely καλόν τι. And having read the *Symposium* we would perhaps be more careful about unreflectively affirming what is καλόν and what is αἰσχρόν, unless we had already perfected the ἐπιστήμη αὐτοῦ τοῦ καλοῦ, but this does not seem to bother the Socratically ignorant Socrates at this point.

But the import of ἡσυχιότης should not be lost on us. In book 6 of the *Republic* we read:

εὐμαθεῖς καὶ μνήμονες καὶ ἀγχίνοι καὶ ὀξεῖς καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τούτοις ἔπεται καὶ νεανικοὶ τε καὶ μεγαλοπρεπεῖς τὰς διανοίας οἷσθ’ ὅτι οὐκ ἐθέλουσιν ἅμα φύεσθαι οἷοι κοσμίως μετὰ ἡσυχίας καὶ βεβαιότητος ἐθέλιν ζῆν, ἀλλ’ οἱ τοιοῦτοι ὑπὸ ὀξύτητος φέρονται ὅπη ἂν τύχωσιν, καὶ τὸ βέβαιον ἅπαν αὐτῶν ἐξοίχεται.¹³³

Those who are quick learners and have good memory and quick to comprehend and in general quick of mind, and all of the like, and those that are eager and noble of mind –

¹²⁸ Cf. the section on comparatives later on (168b5 ff.), where we could easily supply that if something is κάλλιον τινος, it is κάλλιον αἰσχρόνός τινος. ¹²⁹ Cf. Lutoslawski, 203: ‘It is characteristic of the stage of logical advance which Plato had reached when he wrote this small work, that his Socrates commits a paralogism, inferring from the beauty of both temperance and quickness that quickness is temperate (159d).’ ¹³⁰ Cf. Tuckey’ summary, 19 n.: ‘σωφροσύνη τῶν καλῶν ἐστὶ 160b, but often ταχυτής is κάλλιον rather than ἡσυχιότης, therefore often σωφρονέστερον than ἡσυχιότης, therefore σωφροσύνη cannot be ἡσυχιότης τις, ἔκ γε τούτου τοῦ λόγου.’ It is true that Socrates says at 159d10–11 that οὐ τοίνυν κατὰ γε τὸ σῶμα ἡ ἡσυχιότης ἂν ἀλλ’ ἡ ταχυτής σωφρονέστερον εἴη, ἐπειδὴ καλόν ἡ σωφροσύνη, which strictly speaking does not follow unless we take it that καλόν is not only a necessary, but a sufficient, condition of *sophrosyne*, which would be very strange. But the phrasing here is more rhetorical than strictly logical, as is shown by the fact that it is absent from the meticulous conclusion at 160b7–d3. ¹³¹ See *Chrm.* 160c2–d3. Santas generously concludes (116–17): ‘Looked at in this way, Socrates’ argument is, I think, convincing, though from the point of view of impeccable logic it still remains faulty. It remains faulty because Socrates has not produced a single case of quietness of behavior which, so characterized and no further, is either not praiseworthy or disgraceful.’ He means the fact that Socrates throughout has used ἡσυχῇ καὶ βραδέως, for which see above. ¹³² Cf. Irwin’s distinction between ‘A-’ and ‘B-powers’ (*Plato’s moral theory*, 45). ¹³³ R. 503c2–7 (Adam’s emended text).

you know that they are not wont to be born as also disposed to want to live in an orderly fashion, calmly and steadfastly. Rather, those of such a disposition are borne wherever their eagerness carries them, and the steadfastness is long since gone.

We must be aware that we are here talking about more or less natural dispositions. The context is that of attempting to single out among the φύλακες those that are worthy of philosophy. κοσμίως μετὰ ἡσυχίας καὶ βεβαιότητος ἐθέλιν ζῆν refers in particular to the disposition to face fear in battle with calmness. ἀνδρεία, courage, was in book 4 designated as a virtue belonging particularly to the θυμοειδές, the spirited part of the soul,¹³⁴ and was defined as σωτηρία διὰ παντὸς δόξης ὀρθῆς τε καὶ νομίμου δεινῶν τε πέρι καὶ μὴ ‘a keeping safe through everything of correct and lawful opinion about what is terrible and not.’¹³⁵ Still, ἡσυχία is in this case not an aspect of the soul, but akin to Charmides’ examples of walking and talking. For ἡσυχία explicitly connected to the soul we must turn to the discussion of pleasure and pain in book 9,¹³⁶ where it represents the state between pleasure and pain, the lack of both. Since ἀνδρεία is in particular the ability to save its correct opinion through λῦπαι, ἡδοναί, ἐπιθυμιαί, φόβοι,¹³⁷ we can relate the mention of ἡσυχία in the above quote to the ἐπιθυμητικόν, the desiring part of the soul,¹³⁸ as the courageous man depends upon a comparative calmness in his baser desires to be able to withstand. Perhaps we can think of ἡσυχιότης as an essential component of the ἔξις of the ἐπιθυμητικόν insofar as ἁρμονία, συμφωνία, φιλία and ὁμόνοια, i.e. sophrosyne, is to be possible in the tripartite soul of the *Republic*.

Sophrosyne as αἰδώς

Socrates encourages Charmides to take another look into himself (εἰς σεαυτὸν ἐμβλέψας¹³⁹) – another amusing hint about self-knowledge – and try again. This time he answers: δοκεῖ τοίνυν μοι, ἔφη, αἰσχύνεσθαι ποιεῖν ἢ σωφροσύνη καὶ αἰσχυντηλὸν τὸν ἄνθρωπον, καὶ εἶναι ὅπερ αἰδώς ἢ σωφροσύνη. ‘In that case, he said, sophrosyne seems to me to make a man feel shame, and to make him prone to shame, and sophrosyne seems to be the very same thing as shame.’¹⁴⁰ This time Charmides is formally closer to the mark, insofar as he so to speak keeps to the soul. But Aristotle might have been on to something when he wrote that αἰδώς is more akin to πάθος than to ἔξις,¹⁴¹ and if we are to stay with the analogy with ὑγίεια, sophrosyne must be more like a ἔξις than a πάθος, but we should not push this distinction too far.¹⁴² In fact, in the *Phaedrus* αἰδώς seems to figure as a ἔξις, or perhaps rather as the third member of the

¹³⁴ R. 441d1–2, with 429b1–3 and 439e2 ff. ¹³⁵ R. 430b2–4. ¹³⁶ R. 583c7 ff. ¹³⁷ R. 429c9–d1, 430b1. ¹³⁸ R. 580d10–581a1 informs us that this name is given to it because of the σφοδρότης of ‘carnal’ desires, while the part as such is πολυειδές, and in spite of the fact that all three parts have their special ἐπιθυμιαί. ¹³⁹ *Chrm.* 160d6, but codd. has ἀποβλέψας/ἀπεμβλέψας. ¹⁴⁰ *Chrm.* 160e3–5. ¹⁴¹ Arist. *EN* 1128b11. ¹⁴² Cf. Cairns, 373.

Aristotelian soul, a δύναμις,¹⁴³ when the noble horse is called τιμῆς ἐραστής μετὰ σωφροσύνης τε καὶ αἰδοῦς, καὶ ἀληθινῆς δόξης ἑταῖρος ‘a lover of honour, having sophrosyne and shame, and a comrade of true opinion.’¹⁴⁴

Socrates gets rid of this definition by bringing to bear another ‘intuition’ about sophrosyne, namely that the sophron man is ἀγαθός, then making a somewhat strange inference: What is ἀγαθόν cannot ἀπεργάζεσθαι μὴ ἀγαθούς, cannot produce not-good men. We are tempted to ask, Good for whom?¹⁴⁵ There are three ways of saving the argument.

1. To be ἀγαθός can be construed as being good for oneself, disposed to one’s own advantage. Here we can compare *Ly.* 206b6–8, where Socrates and Hippothales agree that it would be a mark of great stupidity to think a poet ἀγαθός if he was βλαβερὸς ἑαυτῷ. In this case, when Socrates quotes Homer – αἰδῶς δ’ οὐκ ἀγαθὴ κεχρημένῳ ἀνδρὶ παρεῖναι, ‘shame is not a good companion for a man in need’¹⁴⁶ – the point is that whereas sophrosyne is something essentially ἀγαθόν, and therefore always good for its possessor, αἰδῶς on the authority of Homer is not, and must therefore be both good and not-good.
2. ἀγαθόν might in its application both to the possessor and the possessum be construed as (a) unconditionally good, i.e. not merely advantageous, or (b) good for someone other than its possessor.
3. αἰδῶς could be construed as a disposition, a δύναμις, and this would perhaps remove the harshness of the argument. If a disposition is an ἀγαθόν, this could simply mean that it is a quality in virtue of which the possessor of this quality is ἀγαθός, in the way that the possessor of κάλλος is καλός, or for that matter in the way that the presence of σωφροσύνη makes one σώφρων. The only problem with this interpretation is the quote from the *Odyssey*, where οὐκ ἀγαθὴ does mean ‘advantageous to’ and not simply the quality which renders its possessor good. However, there is no one to stop Socrates from ignoring the intended meaning of the verse. Although one has attempted to read more into the function of the quote,¹⁴⁷ I believe this to be misguided. Socrates simply descends on παρεῖναι and construes it the same way as with σωφροσύνη earlier on,¹⁴⁸ so that if ἀγαθόν πάρεστι it renders its bearer ἀγαθός.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ Although Aristotle’s concept is construed as essentially normative, not simply as a psychological disposition.

¹⁴⁴ *Phdr.* 253d66–7. ¹⁴⁵ Cf. Cairns, 373 n. 88. ¹⁴⁶ *Hom. Od.* 17.347. ¹⁴⁷ Irwin, *Plato’s ethics*, 37: ‘We sometimes condemn shame as bad, if people are wrongly ashamed of doing an action that is in fact fine and virtuous, so that they display shame on the wrong occasions.’ R. F. Stalley points out that the quote refers to Odysseus-the-beggar and that therefore ‘whether a sense of shame is not appropriate depends on one’s social position’ (266). Irwin interprets αἰδῶς as a πάθος, Stalley, as a δύναμις. ¹⁴⁸ See p. 25. ¹⁴⁹ At *Euthd.* 301a1 ff. Dionysodoros makes Socrates regret this construal of παρεῖναι with κάλλος, asking ἐὰν οὖν ... παραγένηται σοὶ βοῦς, βοῦς εἶ, καὶ ὅτι νῦν ἐγὼ σοὶ πάρεμι, Διονυσόδωρος εἶ;

We already saw that αἰδώς is coupled with sophrosyne in the noble horse of the *Phaedrus*-speech, although it is notoriously difficult to know what sense of sophrosyne is intended. More important is the fact that αἰδώς is coupled with the noble horse, which is normally interpreted as corresponding to the θυμοειδές in the *Republic*.¹⁵⁰ Douglas Cairns argues convincingly that it is also associated with the θυμοειδές in the *Republic* itself.¹⁵¹ If we accept this, I think we can also make a case for αἰδώς being made into a disposition of the θυμοειδές in the process by which the latter is made ἡμερον (coupled with κόσμιον at *R.* 410e3). The term ἡμερον is associated with σωφροσύνη in the *Republic*,¹⁵² but also seems to be reserved for the θυμοειδές, and may thus represent the particular condition necessary for the θυμοειδές to be able to enter into the friendly harmony that is sophrosyne. ἡμερος is the opposite of ἄγριος, and recalls ‘wild’ and ‘tame’ when applied to animals, but bears also the connotation ‘civilised, cultured’ when applied to humans, and the fact that it is associated with the φιλόσοφος φύσις at 410e1 strengthens the feeling that it means more than simply ‘softened’ and may imply a rational element, as does the fact that it is cultivated by μουσική.

Critias is spurred to action

Charmides now gets carried away, and quits his attempt to catch sight of sophrosyne within himself. Rather, he relates a definition he has heard from someone else, and it soon becomes obvious that it is Critias who is the source. It runs: τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν ‘to do one’s own things’.

Sophrosyne as τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν

Socrates contends that it sounds like a riddle, since οὐδὲν δῆπου ἢ τὰ ῥήματα ἐφθέγγατο ταύτη καὶ ἐνόει ‘he (sc. ὁ λέγων) obviously did not mean by his words what he uttered.’¹⁵³ Excluding the article, all three words would need to be clarified: Who or what is referred to by ἑαυτοῦ? What is it that really *belongs*, i.e. is οἰκεῖον, to this subject? What is meant by πράττειν? In reality, of course, the expression as a whole is politically loaded, and means the opposite of

¹⁵⁰ But Ferrari’s suggestion (*Listening to the cicadas*, 202) that the two horses and its charioteer rather are ‘pictures of whole persons waiting to be summoned into being’ is very interesting. ¹⁵¹ Cairns, 381–92. I also think that the evidence in the *Phaedrus* is even stronger than he admits: At 383 n. 117 he refers to *Phdr.* 256a5–6 ‘where the two better parts of the soul resist “with *aidōs* and reason”’, but I think the fact that the noble horse already has been associated with αἰδώς makes it reasonable to construe the μετ’ αἰδοῦς καὶ λόγου as distributive, the former belonging to the horse, the latter to the charioteer. Similarly, Cairns writes that at 254e9 ‘the whole soul follows the beloved with *aidōs*’ (384), where δεδιωγὰν clearly refers to the chastened dark horse, making it natural to couple αἰδουμένην with the white horse. Of course, Cairns is not *wrong*, he simply presents the neutral translations without emphasising what is implicit. ¹⁵² E.g. *R.* 410e10, 441e8–442a2.. ¹⁵³ *Chrm.* 161d1–2.

πολυπραγμονεῖν; Socrates' 'innocent' use of the latter a few lines further on reveals that he knows this perfectly well. His reason for being so difficult is that this interpretation is completely useless as a definition of *sophrosyne*, since we would be back in the sphere of actions, while *sophrosyne* is a quality of the soul. He wants to see whether there is another interpretation which shows more promise. Thus he begins by ridiculing the thought that *sophrosyne* means writing only one's own name, or making and washing only one's own clothes etc. We get the impression that he sinks this low to provoke Critias into defending his λόγος.¹⁵⁴ When Charmides decides to assist Socrates in this mission, blurting out that ἴσως οὐδὲν κωλύει μηδὲ τὸν λέγοντα μηδὲν εἰδέναι ὅτι ἐνόει 'perhaps there is a good chance that even the one who said it has not got a clue about what he meant by it',¹⁵⁵ Critias can control himself no longer. He defends his definition as follows:

(1) πράττειν and ἐργάζεσθαι are synonymous, but ποιεῖν is a more comprehensive term. Like Socrates, Critias exploits a poet, this time Hesiod. Unlike Socrates, the authority of Hesiod seems necessary for his claim to hold, as the distinction in itself finds no support in common usage, and his interpretation of the verse is quite *ad hoc*, too use no stronger word. He maintains that πράττειν and ἐργάζεσθαι implies that their 'products' are καλῶς τε καὶ ὠφελίμως ποιούμενα. (2) τὰ καλῶς τε καὶ ὠφελίμως ποιούμενα, which Socrates goes on to simply call τὰ ἀγαθὰ, is in fact what is meant by τὰ ἑαυτοῦ, τὰ οἰκεῖα.

The latter would of course by itself have sufficed, and this proposed identity between τὰ ἀγαθὰ and τὰ οἰκεῖα is enticing. At once we think of other dialogues where the relation between the two is called into question. Diotima points out the identity as a possibility at *Smp.* 205e6–7, while the discussion of φιλία in the *Lysis* founders on it.¹⁵⁶ But while Diotima follows Critias in seeing τὸ ἀγαθόν as providing the conceptual content, the appellation οἰκεῖον seeming quite arbitrary, the *Lysis* in fact suggests that οἰκεῖον is *not* the same as ἀγαθόν, perhaps even that τὸ ἀγαθόν as the πρῶτον φίλον *is* φίλον *because* it is οἰκεῖον: In the last attempt at a definition Socrates hints at an ἀγαθόν which is not simply ὠφέλιμον because of some κακόν, but one that would remain even if all worldly κακά were to vanish; he suggests that ἐπιθυμία, ἔρως and φιλία – desire in general – would still exist, and to desire is to be lacking (ἐνδεής), to be lacking is to have something taken away (ἀφαιρεῖσθαι), and this would be something which belongs to one (οἰκεῖον). Socrates then slips in φύσει οἰκεῖον without explicit justification, but the qualification hearkens back to the proposed basic status of desire, and receives some legitimacy therefrom. Socrates does not get the chance to probe any deeper in the *Lysis*, but the reader wonders *when* the φύσει οἰκεῖον has been removed from the desiring entity, which in this case is the ψυχή.¹⁵⁷ Our thoughts wander back to the *Symposium* and the myth of Aristophanes,

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *Phdr.* 275e. ¹⁵⁵ *Chrm.* 162b9–10. ¹⁵⁶ *Ly.* 220b6–222d8. ¹⁵⁷ *Ly.* 222a3.

then to the *Phaedrus* and the pinioned soul imprisoned in flesh. We learn that the mind of the gods and their equivalents *ἰδοῦσα διὰ χρόνου τὸ ὄν ἀγαπᾷ τε καὶ θεωροῦσα τὰ ληθῆ τρέφεται καὶ εὐπαθεῖ* ‘beholding the being over time and comes to love it, and watching the truth it is nourished and enjoys itself’,¹⁵⁸ which reminds one of the foundation of a child’s love for the parent, his *οἰκεῖος*, the kind of *φιλία* which is first to be discussed in the *Lysis*,¹⁵⁹ a discussion which is not resumed, but left hanging when Menexenus returns from sacrificing. Moreover, in the *Phaedrus* it is only *νοῦς* which is able to see the hyperuranian beings. Then, in the *First Alcibiades* it is hinted that the true self is *νοῦς*.¹⁶⁰ And finally, in book 9 of the *Republic*, during the discussion of the different *ἐπιθυμίας* and their respective *ἡδοναί*, we read:

τί οὖν, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ· θαρροῦντες λέγωμεν ὅτι καὶ περὶ τὸ φιλοκερδὲς καὶ τὸ φιλόνικον ὅσαι ἐπιθυμίας εἰσὶν, αἱ μὲν ἂν τῇ ἐπιστήμῃ καὶ λόγῳ ἐπόμεναι καὶ μετὰ τούτων τὰς ἡδονὰς διώκουσαι, ἃς ἂν τὸ φρόνιμον ἐξηγῇται, λαμβάνωσι, τὰς ἀληθεστάτας τε λήψονται, ὥς οἷόν τε αὐταῖς ἀληθεῖς λαβεῖν, ἅτε ἀληθεία ἐπομένων, καὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν οἰκείας, εἴπερ τὸ βέλτιστον ἐκάστω, τοῦτο καὶ οἰκειότατον;¹⁶¹

What, then, said I, shall we confidently proclaim that also regarding the desires associated with the part which loves gain and the part which loves victory will those desires which follow knowledge and reason and which pursue their pleasures in company with them – the pleasures which the wise part prescribes, and thus reap their pleasures – these desires will reap the truest pleasures to the maximum extent possible for them – because they follow truth – i.e. those pleasures that belong to them, if indeed that which is best for each thing is also what most belongs to it.

Let us leave the orphaned soul and return to the *Charmides*. The situation is now that *sophrosyne* = τὸ τὰγαθὰ πράττειν. Socrates probes this definition by asking whether it holds even if the agent is unaware of whether he has acted to his own advantage or not, if οὐ γινώσκει ἑαυτὸν ὥς ἔπραξεν ‘he does not know about himself how he has fared’.¹⁶² The reason behind the introduction of this thought must be that Critias definition simply becomes too general. Moreover, the the question of what really is ἀγαθόν has not been asked, and Socrates might be unsatisfied about the stipulated meaning of τὰ ἑαυτοῦ. In any case, *sophrosyne* harbours an association with self-awareness, and Critias will not tolerate the lack of it, so he retracts his definition.

Having read the *Republic* we know that τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν becomes the famous definition of *δικαιοσύνη* in book 4. After establishing this as a definition of *δικαιοσύνη* in the city, and having justified the division of the soul into three parts, Socrates reminds Glaucon that the cobbler cobbling or the carpenter doing carpentry was an εἶδωλον:

¹⁵⁸ *Phdr.* 247d3–4. ¹⁵⁹ Strictly speaking it is the parents’ love for the child which is discussed, but the relation between *οἰκεῖοι* remains the same. ¹⁶⁰ *Alc.* 1, 133b–c; hereafter referred to in the text as ‘the *Alcibiades*’. For a defence of the authenticity of this dialogue, see Annas, ‘Self-knowledge’, 111–15; Denyer, *Plato: Alcibiades*, 14–26.

¹⁶¹ *R.* 586d4–e2. Cf. 585d11: εἰ ἄρα τὸ πληροῦσθαι τῶν φύσει προσηκόντων ἡδύ ἐστι ... ¹⁶² *Chrm.* 164c1.

τὸ δέ γε ἀληθές, τοιοῦτόν τι ἦν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἀλλ' οὐ περὶ τὴν ἔξω πρᾶξιν τῶν αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ περὶ τὴν ἐντός, ὡς ἀληθῶς περὶ ἑαυτὸν καὶ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ, μὴ ἑάσαντα τὰλλότρια πράττειν ἕκαστον ἐν αὐτῷ μηδὲ πολυπραγμονεῖν πρὸς ἄλληλα τὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γένη, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι τὰ οἰκεῖα εὖ θέμενον καὶ ἄρξαντα αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ κοσμήσαντα καὶ φίλον γενόμενον ἑαυτῷ καὶ συναρμόσαντα τρία ὄντα, ὥσπερ ὄρους τρεῖς ἀρμονίας ἀτεχνῶς, νεάτης τε καὶ ὑπάτης καὶ μέσης, καὶ εἰ ἄλλα ἄττα μεταξὺ τυγχάνει ὄντα, πάντα ταῦτα συνδήσαντα καὶ παντάπασιν ἓνα γενόμενον ἐκ πολλῶν, σῶφρονα καὶ ἡρμοσμένον, οὕτω δὴ πράττειν ἤδη, ἐάν τι πράττη ἢ περὶ χρημάτων κτήσιν ἢ περὶ σώματος θεραπείαν ἢ καὶ πολιτικόν τι ἢ περὶ τὰ ἴδια συμβόλαια, ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις ἡγούμενον καὶ ὀνομάζοντα δικαίαν μὲν καὶ καλὴν πρᾶξιν ἢ ἂν ταύτην τὴν ἔξιν σφῶζι τε καὶ συναπεργάζεται, σοφίαν δὲ τὴν ἐπιστατοῦσαν ταύτῃ τῇ πράξει ἐπιστήμην, ἄδικον δὲ πρᾶξιν ἢ ἂν αἰεὶ ταύτην λύῃ, ἀμαθίαν δὲ τὴν ταύτῃ αὐτὴ ἐπιστατοῦσαν δόξαν.¹⁶³

But in truth, justice was something like this, it would seem, but not concerned with the doing of that which is one's own but is external, but with that which is internal, really and truly concerned with oneself and that which is one's own, not allowing each thing within oneself to do what does not belong to it nor allowing the principles of the soul to meddle in the affairs of each other, but really taking proper care of that which belongs to one and ruling oneself and ordering oneself and becoming friendly with oneself and harmonising oneself, being in three parts, like three notes of a harmony, the lowest, the highest and the mean, and if there happen to be others in between – combining them all and becoming in every way one from many, *sophron* and harmonised, and being in this condition to act, whether one concerns oneself with the acquisition of money or tending the body or politics or private contracts – in all of these matters holding and naming just and fine the action which upholds and helps complete this condition, wisdom, the knowledge which is in charge of this action, unjust, the action which at any time dissolves this condition, ignorance, the opinion which is in charge of *this* action.

We see what has been pointed out by many before us, that δικαιοσύνη and *sophrosyne* in the *Republic* are very closely connected. But that each of them requires the other and can only exist together does not mean that they as such cannot be distinguished. δικαιοσύνη is the condition in which each part does what belongs to it, *sophrosyne* is the condition of these parts acting *together*, coordinating their particular affairs, in a *friendly* manner; the soul as such exhibits ὁμόνοια, it acts *as one*. I have suggested that this requires (1) that the ἐπιθυμητικόν sports a comparative ἡσυχία, and (2) that the θυμοειδές has been cultivated, made ἡμερον, which at least includes, if it does not consist in, its acquiring αἰδώς. Now we may add (3) that none of the parts should interfere with what truly belongs to one of the others. But we saw in book 9 that the two lower part cannot truly know what truly belongs to them, what is their own, as the only part which is able to acquire knowledge is the λογιστικόν. Thus this third condition of *sophrosyne*, i.e. δικαιοσύνη, requires knowledge about the self, i.e. knowledge about what belongs to each of its parts, this being the particular objects aimed at by their respective ἐπιθυμῖαι. Otherwise ὠφελίμως πράξας ἢ βλαβερῶς ... οὐ γινώσκει ἑαυτὸν ὡς ἔπραξεν.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ R. 443c9–444a2. ¹⁶⁴ *Chrm.* 164b11–c1.

Sophrosyne as τὸ γινώσκειν ἑαυτόν

We concluded¹⁶⁵ that self-knowledge in the sense of knowing that one does not know something – and thus, we can now add, making it possible to be aware of this object of possible knowledge as something φύσει οἰκεῖον and hence as an object worth pursuing (ζητεῖν) – should be something other than *both* the kind omniscience truly possessed by every immortal soul *and* the kind of knowledge possessed by the incarnated soul after having recollected it. Now we will see how self-knowledge is treated in the *Charmides*.

Critias immediately seizes on Socrates' hint and declares that sophrosyne *is* τὸ γινώσκειν ἑαυτόν. Socrates gets him to agree that if it is γινώσκειν, it must be an ἐπιστήμη, and every ἐπιστήμη has its proper object.¹⁶⁶ What is more, it should be useful (χρησίμη) to us.¹⁶⁷ He first tries to make Critias show what useful *product* sophrosyne has to offer, but Critias replies that not every ἐπιστήμη has an external product, using the example of maths. Socrates contends that at least all ἐπιστήμαι have an external *object*, but Critias makes the crucial point: Sophrosyne differs from every other ἐπιστήμη at precisely this point, that it does not have an external object, but is τῶν τε ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν ἐπιστήμη ... καὶ αὐτὴ ἑαυτῆς 'knowledge of both the other knowledges and of itself'.

This is the famous move from ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτοῦ to ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτῆς. Can the move be defended? It suggests that the self *is* ἐπιστήμη and nothing more. ἐπιστήμη in Greek can mean either (1) science or (2) knowledge (as a state of the soul), so the suggestion would be that the self is knowledge. In the *Alcibiades*, which also discusses what is meant by γινώσκειν ἑαυτόν, Socrates argues first that the ψυχή is properly ἑαυτόν, what one is, while the body parts are τὰ ἑαυτοῦ, on the principle that that which uses (χρῆσθαι) and rules (ἄρχειν) something is different from what it uses and rules, and since a human being uses his body, he is different from it, and the soul too uses and rules the body, making the human being identical with its soul.¹⁶⁸ Then he argues that on analogy with sight and the eye, the soul has the greatest possibility of perceiving (γινῶναι) itself if it looks (1) to that place (τόπος) within itself where the virtue of the soul, i.e. σοφία, comes to be, *or* (2) to that whatever similar (ὅμοιον) to this place: τῷ θεῷ ἄρα τοῦτ' ὅμοιον αὐτῆς, καὶ τις εἰς τοῦτο βλέπων καὶ πᾶν τὸ θεῖον γνούς, θεόν τε καὶ φρόνησιν, οὕτω καὶ ἑαυτόν ἂν γνοίη μάλιστα 'so this part of the soul is similar to god, and if one were to look into it and perceive all the divine, god and wisdom, thus he would also best come to know himself'.¹⁶⁹ This would correspond to ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστήμης. In the following lines, which is only present in Eusebius, it is suggested that god would be a better mirror (λαμπρότερον) for the soul than its own wisdom, in the same way as a mirror-surface would be a better mirror for

¹⁶⁵ See p. 24. ¹⁶⁶ *Chrm.* 165c4–6. ¹⁶⁷ *Chrm.* 165c10 ff. ¹⁶⁸ *Alc.* 1, 129b5 ff. ¹⁶⁹ *Alc.* 1, 133b7–c6.

the eye than the surface of another eye. The analogy with the eye suggests that it might not be necessary to look to one's *own* wisdom, but that of someone else, turning the dialogue into the foundation of self-knowledge. Similarly, in the *Phaedrus*, the beloved turned lover looks to his lover and ὥσπερ ... ἐν κατόπτρῳ ἐν τῷ ἐρῶντι ἑαυτὸν ὁρῶν λέληθεν 'like in a mirror he sees himself in his lover, but the fact escapes his notice'.¹⁷⁰ Julia Annas calls this correspondence between the two dialogues a 'superficially similar image',¹⁷¹ but we must not forget the emphasis that has been put in the *Phaedrus*-speech on κάλλος as λαμπρόν and as a reminder of one's true being, and it is precisely κάλλος which in the transportable form of ἥμερος has flowed from the beloved into the lover, so that he does indeed see himself, i.e. the only aspect of himself which is both perceptible by the senses *and* retains some of the φέγγος of truth. The *Phaedrus* suggests that 'perceiving' φρόνησις is a much trickier affair, where one would, I believe, be forced to use ἀμυδρὰ ὄργανα.

We would not think that Critias has any of this in mind. And we saw above that the upshot of the lengthy argument in the *Charmides* is that this ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστήμης perhaps could have the advantage of knowing that the soul knows what it knows and does not know what it does not know. Socrates finds the very idea that a δύναμις as he calls it should be directed towards itself, since it would then also have the οὐσία of that to which it is directed,¹⁷² and this would presumably lead to an infinite regress: knowledge of knowledge of knowledge of knowledge ... What we have seen in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* can perhaps point to a solution: the element of time. ἐπιστήμη in the sense of worldly knowledge must reproduce itself, i.e. *confirm* itself, *at every moment*; it is knowledge of a finite form. If this does not hold for the true knowledge which has grasped the idea of the good and/or beautiful, it should at least hold for an awareness of what one does and does not know.

Socrates leaves the question of the possibility of such a power hanging, turning to the usefulness it would have granted that it is possible. The first suggestion holds some promise: this knowledge would make it possible to choose those who do have knowledge within a particular area to do the job within that area. Sophrosyne thus directing and ruling everybody else would produce maximum εὐδαιμονία. But Socrates has some misgivings, and asks if ἐπιστημόνως πράττειν = εὖ πράττειν, then ἐπιστημόνως τίνας? Critias is forced to say that the relevant ἐπιστήμη would have as its object the good and the bad.¹⁷³ Socrates, however, points out that this knowledge of good and bad is not knowledge of knowledge, and so if knowledge of good and bad is the necessary and sufficient condition for action performed by any other art, craft or science to be advantageous, sophrosyne as knowledge of knowledge would not be advantageous, and this would be unacceptable.¹⁷⁴ Critias points out that if sophrosyne controls every

¹⁷⁰ *Phdr.* 255d6. ¹⁷¹ Annas, 'Self-knowledge', 132 n. 52. ¹⁷² *Chrm.* 168d1–3. ¹⁷³ *Chrm.* 174b10. ¹⁷⁴ *Chrm.* 174c9–d7.

other knowledge, it would also control the knowledge of good and bad, and would ὠφελεῖν in this way.¹⁷⁵ But Socrates clings to the notion that every branch of knowledge has its own object, so if there is another knowledge of the good which is the true source of advantage/goodness, knowledge of knowledge would not add to this goodness; it seems to be redundant.

Read together with the *Meno*, we might read between the lines that what sophrosyne really is, is not a full-fledged knowledge, but an awareness of possible objects of knowledge, so that its advantage would be tied to temporality: It is advantageous to the extent that is not *yet* master of these objects of knowledge, thus neither is one able to *control* the other knowledges which one does not yet possess. If one had before one a doctor and could verify that he knew the art of medicine, sophrosyne would *no longer* be of use in relation to *this* particular area of knowledge.

What then about our ongoing dialogue with the *Republic*? We mentioned in connection with the Analogy of the dived line that the dialectician of the *Republic* grasps the idea of the good which is the ἀρχή of the other forms. But he also descends again and uses his grasp of the good to understand the other forms, thus getting a precise grasp of the other branches of knowledge. This is the knowledge of the good, and of any other knowledge, which the λογιστικόν brings to bear upon the relationship between the parts of the soul which is sophrosyne. We must remember that the arts and crafts and any individual correctness of ‘orientation in the environment’ must be effected in the world of sense, and thus will presumably require the effort of the whole soul, as well as the knowledge of the λογιστικόν in particular.

¹⁷⁵ *Chrm.* 174d8–e2.

In conclusion

I have argued for the possibility of viewing all the proposed definitions of the *Charmides* as forming necessary aspects or conditions of *sophrosyne* as defined in the *Republic*. ἡσυχιότης as a condition of the ἐπιθυμητικόν stops it from bothering the rest of the soul more than necessary. ἡμερότης in the θυμοειδές, where αἰδώς plays an important part (so our argument goes), is the cultivated condition which makes it ready to accept the superiority of the λογιστικόν in matters of knowledge and reason. The λογιστικόν having attained knowledge of the good, is not in the well-ordered city (and therefore neither in the well-ordered soul) allowed to remain with the forms, but is convinced to descend back down into the cave, and to contribute to the σύνδεσμος τῆς πόλεως, the binding-together of the city. It is convinced by reasoning, as is proper to it: It owes its condition to the city, and must descend to habituate its vision to the darkness below, so that once it gets used to the darkness, it will see much better than the rest, knowing the truth and thus recognising the images; thus the city which maintains its being will itself be best maintained, and will be most exempt from internal strife.¹⁷⁶ In relation to the soul, the same will hold good: If the intellect were unwilling to apply its knowledge to guide the rest of the soul, these would not be governed well, would not attend to their proper objects of desire in the proper way and amount, and would, presumably, meddle in each other's affairs. The relation between the parts of the soul resembles that of a family, and the φιλία, ἁρμονία and ὁμόνοια that can come to flourish between them is the φιλία between true οἰκεῖοι, family members, working for the good for all.

¹⁷⁶ R. 520a6–d4.

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